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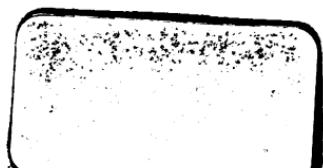
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QUEENHOO HALL.

A LEGENDARY ROMANCE.

BEING

A HISTORY OF TIMES PAST.

BY JOSEPH STRUTT,

AUTHOR OF "RURAL SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND," ETC.

EDITED AND PARTLY WRITTEN

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN CUNNINGHAM, CROWN COURT,
FLEET-STREET,

AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1840.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In departing from his usual practice of placing the novels and romances of this collection before his readers without preface or remark, the Editor of the "NOVEL NEWSPAPER" has, in the present work, the excuse, that it would be indeed an instance of rare negligence to send forth the "Queenhoo Hall" of Mr. Strutt, without directing the attention of the reader to the fact, that this work was not only edited as well as partly written by Sir Walter Scott, but that also to the very fact of his so editing it the public are indebted for the Waverley Novels.

In his general preface to the Waverley Novels, pp. xiv.—xvii., Sir Walter thus alludes to his obligations to "Queenhoo Hall":—

"But it was not only the triumph of Miss Edgeworth which worked in me emulation, and disturbed my indolence: I chanced actually to engage in a work which formed a sort of essay piece, and gave me hope that I might in time become free of the craft of romance-writing, and be esteemed a tolerable workman.

"In the year 1807-8, I undertook, at the request of John Murray, Esq., of Albemarle-street, to arrange for publication some posthumous produc-

tions of the late Mr. Joseph Strutt, distinguished as an artist and an antiquary, amongst which was an unfinished romance, entitled "Queenhoo Hall." The scene of the tale was laid in the reign of Henry the Sixth, and the work was written to illustrate the manners, customs, and language of the people of England during that period. The extensive acquaintance which Mr. Strutt had acquired with such subjects in compiling his laborious "Horda Angel Cynnan," his "Royal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities," and his *Essay on the Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, had rendered him familiar with all the antiquarian lore necessary for the purpose of composing the projected romance; and, although the manuscript bore the marks of hurry and incoherence natural to the first rough draft of the author, it evinced (in my opinion) considerable powers of imagination.

"As the work was unfinished, I deemed it my duty, as editor, to supply such a hasty and inartificial conclusion as could be shaped out from the story, of which Mr. Strutt had laid the foundation. This concluding Chapter XXX. was a step in my advance towards romantic composition."

PREFACE BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

The late Mr. Joseph Strutt was well known to connoisseurs by his "History of Engravers," and by his own performances as an artist. Among the last are many that evince his talents of design, as well as his skill in engraving. To literary men he was distinguished by his sedulous and honourable endeavours to illustrate the early history of his country. The "Horda Angel Cynnan," comprising an account of the dresses and costume used in England during the various ages, from the invasion of the Saxons to the last century, is a work not only of value to the antiquary, but to all who, reading the early history of their country, are desirous to identify, with the events recorded, some idea of the external appearance of those by whom they were performed. "The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England," with the corresponding engravings, is a work of equal merit; and those who undervalue the labour and skill necessary to select the materials of

such a composition, are little aware, how much more the fire of genius is kindled and excited by a single circumstance of minute and picturesque reality, than by an hundred elegant, round, and polished periods, in which events are generally narrated, without a tittle to mark whether they happened in Britain or Palestine.

But, independent of his merits as an excellent artist, and a sedulous antiquary, Mr. Strutt possessed powers of imagination, of which the following volumes are a satisfactory, though necessarily, an imperfect specimen.

The romance, entitled Queenhoo Hall, was acquired by the editor in an imperfect state; and although the tale is brought, by a literary friend, to a hasty conclusion, yet, from the materials which remain, there is reason to believe, that Mr. Strutt intended it should neither be so abruptly, nor so artificially terminated. Traces are to be discovered in the manuscript, of adventures

sketched but not finished, and of new characters to be illustrated in the future process of the story; but there remained not sufficient evidence of the path which the author intended to pursue; and, therefore, it was deemed more fitting to trust to the reader's liberal candour, for the disproportions natural in a story not finished by the original author, than to make the memory of Mr. Strutt responsible for the edifice built by another, when the foundations he had laid were scarcely to be traced. It is also to be noticed, that, although the ancient dialect is observed with great accuracy (generally speaking) by the lower personages of the romance, yet the language and manners of the higher rank are not gothicised, if the reader will permit the expression, in the same proportion. Lord Boteler, his daughter, and visitors, talk nearly like people of rank in the present day, while their domestics use the language of the feudal ages. It seems probable that the author intended, at his leisure, to harmonise these jarring parts of his picture, and that the present narrative only presents the outline and main plan of his building, without the gothic façade, which should have given a character to the whole. The Editor, however, has not ventured to remedy this defect, because it could not have been done without re-writing a large proportion of the work;

because the tale is in itself interesting, and the reason of such slight inconsistencies obvious and irremediable; and, lastly, because perchance he found himself unequal to fill up the extensivisms which had been sketched by so excellent an antiquary as the deceased author.

The scene of this fictitious narrative is laid in the neighbourhood of Tewin, in Hertfordshire, which was distinguished as the scene of many charitable and benevolent exertions of the worthy author. Many of the places described in the vicinity would have received illustrations from his pen, and probably also from his pencil, had he lived to finish the task he had undertaken.

The talents of Mr. Strutt as a poet, are evinced not only by many lyrical pieces scattered through these volumes, of which some may justly claim an uncommon share of applause, but by the drama entitled "Ancient Times," which, though perhaps hardly fitted for the stage, contains some passages of great poetical merit.

Upon the whole, it is hoped the public will be at once favourable and indulgent to the literary remains of one, to whom the ancient history of his country owes much; whose Editor may boldly claim for him the applause due to genius, and the debt owing to departed industry and worth.

London, 1st April, 1808.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The history, of itself, which is partly fictitious, and partly founded upon real circumstances, admits of great variety of characters and incidents; sufficient, it is hoped, to render it abstractedly interesting. But the chief purpose of the work is to make it the medium of conveying much useful instruction, impereceptibly, to the minds of such readers as are disgusted at the dryness usually concomitant with the labours of the antiquary, and present to them a lively and pleasing representation of the manners and amusements of our forefathers, under the form most likely to attract their notice.

The scene of this piece is laid in England; and the time (in which the events are supposed to take place,) is in the reign of Henry the Sixth, about the middle of the fifteenth century. The domestic manners, &c. of the English, at that period, are very little known; though a thorough investigation of them is positively necessary, to link together (if I may be allowed the expression,) those of the preceding and those of the succeeding centuries. Hence this publication may be deemed generally useful; and especially to the lovers of old English poetry, which it will make much more intelligible, in a variety of instances, by explaining many obsolete customs,

frequently alluded to by the poets, and, above all, by the early dramatic writers of this country.

The different degrees of the people, from the nobleman to the peasant, have their places in the romance; their characters are marked by their language and deportment; the speeches are, in general, sufficiently modernised to make them perfectly intelligible; but, at the same time, they contain enough of the phraseology of the age to give them an air of antiquity.

The sumptuous manner of living, which distinguished the nobility of this country in days of yore, the furniture of their mansions, the trains of domestics, and retainers belonging to them, and the pomp they assumed upon occasions of solemnity, are contrasted with the more humble dwellings, decorations, and festivals, of persons less opulent, descending to the cottage of the rustic.

The various pursuits, and domestic amusements of all ranks of persons, form a part of the work; and especially, the exhibitions of the wandering minstrels, jugglers, narrators of fables, &c.; the nature of their spectacles are explained, from their most brilliant performances to those adapted to the taste of the rustics in common drinking-houses, with appropriate specimens of their poetry and tales.

GLOSSARY.

A.

Abashed, used as discomfited, agitated.
Abet, assist.
Abi, abuy or purchase.
Accoiled, bustled together, crowded.
Adad, an exclamation ; in faith, in troth.
Adawed, affrighted, daunted.
Aguisement, attire.
Afray, v. frighten.
Albe, although.
Algates, nevertheless, for all that.
Amated, terrified, struck with horrour.
Arede, to advise, direct.
Areed, to advise.
Arraught, arrested, caught.
Askance, awry.
Assay, attempt, attack.
Avengement, punishment, vengeance.
Avise (aviser Fr.), to counsel.
Award, *Awardment*, adjudge, adjudgment.
Awhaped, alarmed, daunted.

B.

Baldrick, a girdle.
Bandog, a dog usually tied up.
Barley-break, a childish game.
Baslard, a dagger or wooden knife.
Bassinet, a kind of helmet.
Bale, v. (a term in falconry) ; when a hawk is said to bate, he leaves the game. Contracted also from abate.
Baudekin, a cloth of gold tissue, with figures in silk, for female dress.
Bay, to bark.
Bedight, equip, dressed.
Benempt, called, named.
Betide, befall.
Bewrayed, betrayed, discovered.
Bickerments, quarrelling.
Bonnet, to veil the bonnet, to do reverence ; toss in the air, a token of delight.
Bording, teasing, troubling.
Borrel, boorish ; from boor, a clown.
Bosket, thicket.
Brand, *Brand* iron, a sword.
Bren, burn.
Burly, adj. great of stature, bulky, tumid.

C.

Cark, misfortune, woe.
Cart, a churl.
Certes, assuredly, doubtless.
Chevestail, a gorget.
Chevisances, achievements, feats.
Clary, claret.
Coat-hardy, an upper garment.
Cockerel, a young cock ; metaphorically, a sprightly youth.
Con, to cast up, to reckon ; also to learn.
Conning, knowledge.
Conteke, contention.
Cour, to sneak, to crouch.
Courtpie, in women's dress, a short vest.

Couthly, *couthful*, skilfully.

Costard, the head ; also a sort of apple.
Craking, or *Creaking*, talking, boasting.
Crease, a trench in the ground.

D.

Dareindo, hardihood, daringfeat.
Defl, *Defly*, dexterous, skilful, skilfully.
Dempt, deemed, supposed.
Dersignement, overture, application.
Disguisement, dress of concealment.
Disport, entertainment.
Disour, professional storyteller.
Doff, to put off.
Dorture, the common room where friars in a convent sleep.
Doughty, stout.
Drent, drenched.
Dreiment, sorrow.
Durance, the stuff used in female dress now termed Durant.

E.

Eftsoons, presently.
Eke, also.
Empeach, prevent.
Emprise, undertaking.
Enaunter, but that.
Encheson, occasion, cause, reason.

F.

Faling, cheating, deceiving.
Fay, by my fay, faith, by my faith.
Faylor, a doer.
Fee, companion.
Fit, a fit of music, a piece or stave.
Fordone, undone.
Foined, pushed, as in fencing.
Forefend, hinder, prevent.
Forehint, seized.
Forethink, to repine.
Forsay, v. predict.
For-worn, much worn, worn out.

G.

Gage, v. wager, throw down the gauntlet.
Gainsay, thwart, contradict, deny.
Gambason, a kind of proof coat for the body.
Gauded, adorned, mounted, or set as jewels.
Geer, goods and chattels ; also stuff.
Gree, taste, feelings ; also reward.
Giglet, a light wench.
Gipsire, a pouch. Anciently the women's pockets were worn outside of the dress, and were formed of such durable stuff as leather, &c., and much ornamented.

Gisarme, a halberd with two points or pikes.

Glave, a sword.

Guerdon, reward.

Guise, habit, condition.

H.

Hardiment, bravery.
Hest, command.
Hight, called, entitled ; also ordered.
Hilding, a paltry fellow.

<i>Hinderlin</i> , one behind in his duty.	<i>Roister</i> , a boisterous fellow.
<i>Hippocras</i> , wine brewed with spices.	<i>Royne</i> , to bite or gnaw.
<i>Holidam</i> , the Virgin.	S.
<i>Howlet</i> , an owl.	
<i>Hosen</i> , hose, stockings.	<i>Samile</i> , a kind of cloth.
<i>Huffcap</i> , strong English ale; so called from its effects when too liberally taken.	<i>Say or Sey</i> , a thin silken stuff.
<i>Hyke</i> , a kind of cloak.	<i>Scath</i> , or <i>Scathe</i> , hurt, injury.
	<i>Sconce</i> , head, pate.
J.	<i>Seely</i> , silly, ignorant.
<i>Jape</i> , joke.	<i>Selwouth</i> , strange, wonderful.
<i>Joyance</i> , pleasure, enjoyment.	<i>Sheen</i> , shining, fair.
K.	<i>Snaffle</i> , a horse's bit without a curb.

<i>Ken</i> , v. know.	<i>Soothlike</i> , very probably, truly.
<i>Kirtle</i> , an upper garment, a gown.	<i>Souvenance</i> , knowledge.
<i>Kestrel</i> , a hawk.	<i>Sickerly</i> , surely.
<i>Knac</i> eteries, toys, baubles.	<i>Sicker</i> , sure, secure; still used in Scotland in this sense.
L.	<i>Simmel</i> , a cake or bun, made of fine flour.
<i>Leasings</i> , or <i>Leesings</i> , lies, falsehood, deceit.	<i>Sithen'e</i> , since.
<i>Leech</i> , doctor.	<i>Stalworth</i> , stout, brave.
<i>Leer</i> , learning.	<i>Stammel</i> , coarse stuff for female dress.
<i>Leman</i> , sweetheart, mistress.	<i>Stark</i> , entirely.
<i>Lett</i> , hinder, stop.	<i>Steven</i> , outcry, uproar.
<i>Leven</i> , lightning.	<i>Stound</i> , s. time, period.
<i>Lout</i> , v. to bow or cringe.	<i>Stint</i> , v. cease, stop.
<i>Lout</i> , s. a booby.	<i>Stower</i> , condition, situation.
<i>Lozel</i> , a lazy fellow.	<i>Subversed</i> , overturned.
<i>Lurdane</i> , a dull, heavy fellow, a drone in society.	<i>Supertunic</i> , upper coat; <i>Roquelaure</i> , fr.
<i>Lustihood</i> , courage, vigour.	<i>Swashbuckler</i> , a braggadocio.

M.	T.
<i>Maltalent</i> , angry mood.	<i>Tarantine</i> , a silken stuff for dress.
<i>Main angry</i> , very angry..	<i>Thwille</i> , a knife.
<i>Mainly</i> , considerably.	<i>Tregetour</i> , a juggler.
<i>Misprize</i> , mistake.	<i>Trow</i> , v. conceive, thipk.
<i>Misweening</i> , misunderstanding.	<i>Trowle</i> , pass about, as in drinking.
<i>Mured</i> , shut up within walls.	<i>Tunic</i> , a coat, upper garment.
N.	<i>Twitten</i> , to blame.
<i>Nathless</i> nevertheless.	U.
<i>Noyous</i> , ad. unhappy.	<i>Uncase</i> , undress.
<i>Nonce</i> , purpose, intent, design.	<i>Uneathly</i> , uneasily.
<i>Noyance</i> , hurt, injury.	<i>Unnurtured</i> , untutored, ignorant.
<i>Nurtured</i> , educated, instructed.	<i>Upbraying</i> , upbraiding.

O.	V.
<i>Overcraw</i> , insult.	<i>Vail</i> , to succumb, to knock under.

P.	<i>Volupure</i> , a kind of female head-dress, or envelope of cloth for the head.
<i>Paravaunt</i> , perhaps, peradventure.	W.
<i>Peark</i> , brisk.	<i>Waesheal</i> , wassail, carousal.
<i>Perdie</i> , (an oath) by heaven.	<i>Watchel-coloured</i> , pale blue.
<i>Pell</i> , a wooden post.	<i>Wayment</i> , distress, unfortunate circumstances.]
<i>Pelt</i> , skin.	<i>Weird-woman</i> , a witch.
<i>Pereyal</i> , or <i>Paregal</i> , equal.	<i>Ween</i> , v. to think.
<i>Pight</i> , fixed.	<i>Wend</i> , v. to go.
<i>Portfaunce</i> , bearing, carriage, behaviour.	<i>Weeten</i> , wishing, greeting.
<i>Prow</i> , more <i>prow</i> , of more prowess, valiant.	<i>Whittle</i> , a knite; also <i>Thwille</i> .
<i>Purfled</i> , embroidered.	<i>Wightily</i> , courageously.

Q.	<i>Wise</i> , <i>Wis</i> , <i>W'st</i> , know, knew.
<i>Quell</i> , to foil, to kill.	<i>Wode</i> , mad.
<i>Quaint</i> , extinguished.	<i>Wonne</i> , v. to reside.
<i>Quiddity</i> , a quick or subtle question.	<i>Wot</i> , v. to be sensible of.
<i>Quintain</i> , (fr.) a post with a turning top. The game of Quintain was played thus. An upright post was fixed in the ground, on the top of which a cross post turned upon a pin; at one end there was a broad board, and at the other a heavy sandbag; the play was to ride against the broad end with a lance, and escape before the sandbag coming round should strike you.	x.

R.	<i>F'clad</i> , dressed, clothed.
<i>Reckless</i> , heedless, careless.	<i>Frowns</i> .
<i>Rede</i> , advice, counsel.	<i>Yshent</i> , blamed, scolded.
<i>Roche</i> , a lawn garment resembling a surplice gathered at the wrists.	<i>Yshiven</i> , confessed and absolved.
	<i>Ywis</i> , I wis, I knew.

QUEENHOO HALL.

CHAPTER I.

Description of a May-Game in the Fifteenth Century.

"In good sooth, Gregory, you carry matters too far," said Thomas.

"Not in the least," answered Gregory. "Go to; I am not the ass you take me to be."

"That were a godly jape indeed," retorted Thomas, "to take my lord's jester for an ass; but shame upon you to be so set askance for a word or two."

"Word me no words," quoth Gregory; "I will not perform the hobby-horse; and if the hobby-horse be not performed, wot ye well, the morris will be stark naught;—let Gervas look to it; it comes of his knavery."

"But you are so choleric," said Thomas.

"Look you now," answered the jester; "it is acknowledged on all hands, that no man can jerk the hobby, or rein him, or prance him, like me: I have played the horse with transcendent applause, before this cockerel broke his egg-shell. And shall I be told to my beard by such an howlet, that I know not how to use the bells? May the foul fiend take me, but it were a good deed done to break the hilts of my dagger over the knave's costard!"

"A fig for him," quoth Thomas; "you know he is an idle lozel; it is ever his guise to be prating like magpie; heed him not, for we have all agreed that you shall have the double bells, bought for my lord's own morris; we have provided the hobby a new snaffle; and Peter Lanaret has made an addition of colt's hair to his tail, which reaches to the ground."

"Say you so?" returned the jester: "why then I will relent; I will play the hobby-horse. In sooth, it would have been a sorry trick to have spoiled the morris for want of the hobby; and especially, that it should have been spoiled by the operations of a silken lackey. Certes, you all know there is not one among you qualified to play the beast like me."

"You say true," answered Thomas; "you have always been excellent at playing the beast. But see yonder, our comrades are all of them equipped in their disguisements. Away, for shame! the morris will be ready before you are mounted."

"Never fear," said Gregory; "be but the bells

hung at the hobby's ears, and I will be on horseback before they have gone through half their postures."

This dialogue passed between Gregory the jester and Thomas the reve's son, in the court of Queenhoo Hall, at Tewin, in Hertfordshire, the residence of Lord Edward Boteler, a baron of great opulence in the reign of King Henry the Sixth, and a great favourite at the court of that unfortunate monarch.

It happened on the morning of the first of May, that, the family being absent, the household servants had engaged with the villagers to join in the celebration of the May-games; and were now preparing to exhibit their pageant, by way of rehearsal, in the great hall, when a loud knocking at the gate announced the arrival of some person of consequence. There was not one of the servants, excepting Oswald the chamberlain, equipped in his proper habit; and he proceeded gravely to the gate, where, having performed the office of the porter, he was greatly astonished by the appearance of the Lady Matilda, daughter of Lord Boteler, alighting from a litter, accompanied by her cousin, the Lady Eleanor. He had no time to give information to the motley tribe within; and the ladies, on entering the hall, were equally surprised at the sight of the pageantry.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Matilda, but not with anger — "Bless me! Oswald, what may all this mean?"

The chamberlain approached, and bowing very obsequiously, instead of answering the question, attempted to welcome them home. "I hope," said he, "your ladyship is in health; and also the Lady Eleanor, your fair cousin. You are welcome home; you come indeed rather unexpectedly. Saint Thomas grant his lordship may be in perfect health! Fly upon it! we are all unprepared for his reception! Begone, you varlets, and make you ready! Is his lordship coming soon? The knaves, I trow, have set all things at sixes and sevens."

"And on my part, I think the same," rejoined the lady with a smile; "but all is well, I hope?"

"Oh yes, your ladyship," answered the chamberlain, encouraged by her gentle manner of speaking; "all is well, all is excellently well."

"And wherefore," said she, "do I see this confusion in the hall?—the domestics are so far-

tastically habited, that, were not some of the faces familiar to me, I should have taken them for a troop of foreigners: I beseech you inform me what new livery it is they have taken on them to wear."

Oswald bowed very low, and thus replied: "Your honour must know that this day is the first of the merry month of May, and the varlets have agreed,—not meaning the least harm, my lady, but simply for deport sake,—to join the villagers, who are about to erect a May-pole on the green in the afternoon after the old guise: and the knaves, as you see, are equipped for the pageant."

"And nothing more than a May-game is preparing?" said Matilda.

"Nothing more, by my fay!" returned the chamberlain: "in good sooth, nothing more: but now the pageant is done. Away, away, ye varlets! I weened it was an idle frolic!—uncase in an instant; and off with these loxel knackeries!—on with your proper vestments, and every one to his vocation!"—

"Be not so hasty, Oswald," said his mistress; "for I do not see any just cause why our arrival should deprive your comrades of any innocent amusement in which they may reasonably participate: and therefore I commission you to see that the sports go forward, and with additional splendour; for we, my dear Eleanor," continued she, addressing herself to her cousin, "if you have no objection, will walk down to the green, and see the ceremonies."

"I know not any thing," returned the Lady Eleanor, "in my present humour, that could please me better; I love to be 'merry myself, and am never more delighted than when I see all about me happy."

Matilda ordered the chamberlain to cause a pavilion to be erected on the green for their reception; and then the ladies retired.

The unexpected arrival of the baron's daughter had occasioned the greatest consternation among the ringleaders of the pageant; they concluded that all their preparations had been made to no purpose, and vexed by the disappointment, were returning to their respective duties with very gloomy countenances; but when it was known among them that their lovely young mistress not only permitted the exhibition of the sports, but proposed to honour their performance with her presence, the hall rang with acclamations of joy; the pageant was rehearsed with great glee, and every heart was exhilarated by her condescension.

The Boteler family made a great figure in Hertfordshire. Lord Edward Boteler, as already noticed, was in high favour with his sovereign, and held a post of importance at court. Queenhoo Hall, the noble family mansion, was situated about four miles from the town of Hertford; it was a spacious edifice, and large vestiges of it remain even to this day.

Lord Edward was young when he married; he had three children by his lady,—two sons and a daughter; the sons both died early in life, and his lordship was left a widower at the age of forty-five. His lovely daughter, at the fatal period that robbed him of his wife, had just reached her eighteenth year: she was exceedingly beautiful, elegantly formed, and, above all, possessed a mind superior in excellencies to her external endow-

ments. On the death of her mother, Lord Edward had made her the superintendent of his family; and this office she performed with such decorum, as acquired at once the respect and the love of the servants.

Well aware that it would be irksome for his daughter to be much alone, and fearful of exposing her to the boundless limits of the court, Lord Edward kept her much in retirement, but added to her enjoyment the company of a lively companion,—the only daughter of his deceased brother: her name was Eleanor; and the sprightliness of her disposition was well calculated to stimulate the mind of Matilda to cheerfulness, which of itself was too much inclined to gravity. These fair companions felt for each other a pure sisterly affection; and as their dispositions, especially in points of love, were not precisely the same, there seemed to be none of those little jealousies prevalent in their minds, which are usually destructive of domestic happiness.

It chanced that the king, in the spring of the year, removed his court from London to Saint Albans'; and as Lord Edward, by virtue of his office at court, accompanied his royal master, he had sent for his daughter and niece to meet him there. On their arrival, the ladies were introduced to the queen; and their reception was such as gave great satisfaction to Lord Edward. The lustre of the court grew on Eleanor's mind; and the adoration of the courtiers was a sort of homage that she found herself highly gratified in indulging. Matilda, on the contrary, was by no means satisfied with the inflated adulation of the court; she had sense enough to conceive that she was not an angel; and, amidst the blaze of splendour, sighed for the tranquillity of retirement.

A tournament had been proposed, and great preparations made for the display of the pompous pageant, when an irruption of the Scots in the north of England postponed the show; and the king immediately set off from Saint Albans', in order to collect forces sufficient to repel the invaders. The queen retired to London; and Lord Edward, who still accompanied his majesty, sent his daughter and her cousin home to the family mansion at Tewin, with an attendant. How affairs stood at Queenhoo Hall when the ladies arrived has already been shown.

Dinner was ordered early; and when it was over, the ladies were informed that all things were in readiness for their reception on the green.

When the ladies reached the pavilion, they were welcomed with loud shouts by the rustics, who were assembled in crowds to see the May-games; and soon after their arrival, they were joined by the young Baron Fitzallen of Marden, together with Fitzosborne of Digwell, and his two sisters, who came to see the sports; and, having heard the ladies were returned to Tewin, and meant to be present at the pastime, took the opportunity of paying their respects to them. These were followed by several other gentlemen and ladies from the adjacent villages, who were all of them received with the greatest politeness by the Lady Matilda and her fair cousin; and when the company were seated, the sports began.

In the front of the pavilion, a large square was staked out, and fenced with ropes, to prevent the crowd from pressing upon the performers, and

interrupting the diversion ; there were also two bars at the bottom of the enclosure, through which the actors might pass and repass, as occasion required.

Six young men first entered the square, clothed in jerkins of leather, with axes upon their shoulders like woodmen, and their heads bound with large garlands of ivy leaves intertwined with sprigs of hawthorn. Then followed,

Six young maidens of the village, dressed in blue kirtles, with garlands of primroses on their heads, leading a fine sleek cow, decorated with ribbons of various colours interspersed with flowers ; and the horns of the animal were tipped with gold. These were succeeded by

Six foresters, equipped in green tunics, with hoods and hose of the same colour ; each of them carried a bugle-horn attached to a baldric of silk, which he sounded as he passed the barrier. After them came

Peter Lanaret, the baron's chief falconer, who personified Robin Hood ; he was attired in a bright grass-green tunic, fringed with gold ; his hood and his hose were parti-coloured, blue and white ; he had a large garland of rose-buds on his head, a bow bent in his hand, a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bugle-horn depending from a baldric of light blue tarantine, embroidered with silver ; he had also a sword and a dagger, the hilts of both being richly embossed with gold.

Fabian a page, as Little John, walked at his right hand ; and Cecil Cellerman, the butler, as Will Stukeley, at his left. These, with ten others of the jolly outlaw's attendants who followed, were habited in green garments, bearing their bows bent in their hands, and their arrows in their girdles. Then came

Two maidens, in orange-coloured kirtles with white courtpies, strewing flowers ; followed immediately by

The maid Marian, elegantly habited in a watchet-coloured tunic reaching to the ground ; over which she wore a white lace rochet with loose sleeves, fringed with silver, and very neatly plaited ; her girdle was of silver baudekin, fastened with a double bow on the left side ; her long flaxen hair was divided into many ringlets, and flowed upon her shoulders ; the top part of her head was covered with a net-work cowl of gold, upon which was placed a garland of silver, ornamented with blue violets. She was supported by

Two bride-maidens, in sky-coloured rochets girt with crimson girdles, wearing garlands upon their heads, of blue and white violets. After them came

Four other females in green courtpies, and garlands of violets and cowslips. Then

Sampson, the smith, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter staff on his shoulder ; and Morris, the mole-taker, who represented Much, the miller's son, having a long pole with an inflated bladder attached to one end. And after them

The Maypole, drawn by eight fine oxen, decorated with scarfs, ribbons, and flowers of divers colours, and the tips of their horns were embellished with gold. The rear was closed by

The hobby-horse and the dragon.

When the Maypole was drawn into the square, the foresters sounded their horns, and the populace expressed their pleasure by shouting incessantly until it reached the place assigned for its elevation ;

and during the time the ground was preparing for its reception the barriers of the bottom of the enclosure were opened for the villagers to approach and adorn it with ribbons, garlands, and flowers, as their inclination prompted them.

The pole being sufficiently onerated with faery, the square was cleared from such as had no part to perform in the pageant, and then it was elevated amid the reiterated acclamations of the spectators. The woodmen and the milk-maidens danced around it according to the rustic fashion. The measure was played by Peretto Cheverette, the baron's chief minstrel, on the bagpipes, accompanied with the pipe and tabour, performed by one of his associates. When the dance was finished, Gregory the jester, who, as we have observed, undertook to play the hobby-horse, came forward with his appropriate equipment, and frisking up and down the square without restriction, imitated the galloping, curveting, ambling, trotting, and other paces of a horse, to the infinite satisfaction of the lower classes of the spectators. He was followed by Peter Parker, the baron's ranger, who personated a dragon, hissing, yelling, and shaking his wings with wonderful ingenuity ; and to complete the mirth, Morris, in the character of Much, having small bells attached to his knees and elbows, capered here and there between the two monsters in the form of a dance, and as often as he came near to the sides of the enclosure he cast silly a handful of meal into the faces of the gaping rustics, or rapped them about their heads with the bladder tied at the end of his pole. In the mean time, Sampson, representing Friar Tuck, walked with much gravity around the square, and occasionally let fall his heavy staff upon the toes of such of the crowd as he thought were approaching more forward than they ought to do ; and if the sufferers cried out from the sense of the pain, he addressed them in a solemn tone of voice, advising them to count their beads, say a paternoster or two, and to beware of purgatory. These vagaries were highly palatable to the populace, who announced their delight by repeated plaudits and loud bursts of laughter. For this reason they were continued for a considerable length of time, but Gregory, beginning at last to falter in his paces, ordered the dragon to fall back. The well-nurtured beast, being out of breath, readily obeyed, and their two companions followed their example, which concluded this part of the pastime.

Then Thomas, the reve's son, came to the front of the pavilion, where he was met by a party of young men and maidens belonging to the procession, and the following dialogue, composed for the purpose by Peretto, the minstrel, was sung, and he accompanied the voices with his harp :—

PALMER. To the Women.

Fair damsels, say what brings you here ?

DAMSELS.

To celebrate the first of May.

PALMER.

Wherefore this day to you so dear ?

DAMSELS.

It is bold Robin's wedding-day.

Chorus.

With sprightly dance and carols gay,
We welcome Robin's wedding-day.

PALMER. To the Men.

Why stand the bowmen in a row?

MEN.

Prepared to play a skilful game.

PALMER.

Some saint to honour 'tis I trow?

MEN.

'Tis Robin Hood, for that's his name.

Chorus.

With sprightly dance and carols gay,

We keep bold Robin's wedding-day.

PALMER.

But who is she, so fair, bedight

In tunic blue and rochet white?

WOMAN.

Dost thou not know her, holy man?

It is the blithe maid Marian.

PALMER.

How name ye him y'clad in green,

With party hose and fringes sheen?

MAN.

It is the prince of archer's good:

And he is hight bold Robin Hood.

Chorus.

With merry carol, dance, and play,

We welcome Robin's wedding day.

PALMER.

I am a stranger, well ye wot,

And much have travelled. I have seen

The Lord's sepulchre, and the grot

Where he was born of maiden clean.

The shells of Cales, in sign of grace,

Adorn my hat;—and you may spy

A vernicle, with His dear face

Impress'd who died on Calvary.

Upon my cloak Saint Peter's keys

Were drawn at Rome, with crosses wide:

And reliques from beyond the seas

I bear, or woe may me betide!

The snow-topped hills of Armonie,

Where Nöe's ark may now be found,

I've seen—in sooth, I do not lie—

Told o'er my beads, and kiss'd the ground.

At Walsingham my vows I've paid:

At Waltham Eke, and Coloraine;

And to Saint Thomas I have prayed,

Who near the holly rood was slain.

But tell me to what saint, I pray,

What martyr, or what angel bright,

I dedicate this holy day,

That brings you here so gaily dight?

This calendar I've searched with care

For saints y'bless'd and angels good;

The holy saints are named there,

But no such saint as Robin Hood.

MEN.

Dost thou not, simple Palmer, know—

What every child can tell thee here—

Nor saint nor angel claims this show,

But the bright season of the year.

WOMEN.

The cowslips now adorn the dells:

On sunny banks primroses blow,

With violets sweet and dainty bells,

And on the green the daisies grew.

The birds in warbling chorus sing

In hedge, and grove, and shady wood,

Inviting us to hail the spring,

And join the troop of Robin Hood.

Chorus.

With merry carol, dance, and play,

We welcome Robin's wedding-day.

When the dialogue was concluded, the archers set up a target at the lower part of the green, and made trial of their skill in regular succession. Robin Hood and Will Stukeley excelled their comrades, and both of them lodged an arrow in the centre circle of gold, so near to each other that the difference could not readily be decided, which occasioned them to shoot again, when Robin struck the gold a second time, and Stukeley's arrow was fixed upon the edge of it. Robin was therefore adjudged the conqueror, and the prize of honour, a garland of laurel embellished with variegated ribbons, was put upon his head; and to Stukeley was given a garland of ivy, because he was the second best performer in that contest.

The pageant was finished with the archery, and the procession began to move away, to make room for the villagers, who afterward assembled in the square, and amused themselves by dancing round the Maypole in promiscuous companies, according to the ancient custom.

When the enclosure was nearly cleared, and the populace were preparing to take possession of it for the exhibition of their tumultuous gambols, the attention of the whole assemblage was suddenly diverted to the lower part of the green, where a loud shouting was made, and a crowd of people appeared hastening towards the pavilion. Every one appeared to be surprised, because there was no addition to the pageantry expected, and all were anxious to know what further pastimes were to be exhibited. The baron's fair daughter, turning to the chamberlain, who stood behind her, said, with a smile, "I thought the May-games were concluded."

"By our holy dam, my lady," said Oswald, bowing, "I weened they were; but, I trow, the varlets have contrived some new knackeries."

While he was speaking, six men entered the square, uncouthly habited in short tunics of parti-coloured asy, having long yellow hose fastened to their jerkins, with blue and red points; their mantles were skins of wild beasts, with the fur outwards, and their heads were covered with great garlands of counterfeit oaken leaves: every one of them bore a large knotted club upon his shoulder, and had a ram's horn suspended at his side by a thong of leather. These were followed by two pages, habited in blue, and wearing garlands of ivy: one of them carried a huge quarter-staff; and the other, a tablet, on which was depicted the portraiture of a beautiful female fantastically habited. Immediately after them came a tall, stout man, in a mummary disguise, resembling a savage; his body and limbs were covered with long hair; his face was hidden by an unseemly vizor, to which was attached a large blue beard; and his head was overwhelmed with a garland of oak and ivy leaves entwined together.

This gigantic figure stalked round the enclosure, holding in his right hand a beautiful chaplet of goldsmith's work, enriched with pearls, which he showed to the crowd as he passed. When he

came to the front of the pavilion, he hung it up in the presence of the company there assembled, and with a deep, hoarse voice, addressed them in the following terms :

" Be it known to all :—This peerless chaplet belongs to the Sovereign of the May, and I am her champion. If you ask me who this lady is, I answer, the most excellent princess the Lady Triamore, Queen of Fairy-land, and the paragon of beauty. She has sent by me this faint resemblance of her person, that all who see it may confess her charms." So saying, he took the tablet from the page, and showed it to the assembly; he afterwards hung it up beneath the chaplet, and casting his gauntlet on the ground, turned to the populace, and resumed his speech :—

" In the name of the Lady Triamore, I here propose three separate trials of strength and skill, and challenge three of the stoutest and boldest men in this large circle to practise man to man with me. If I be foiled, the victor shall claim this costly chaplet for his meed, to be by him bestowed on the fairest dame present; but if I be the conqueror, (as no doubt I shall,) the vanquished man shall own himself my lady's slave, and, humbly kneeling upon his knees, kiss the ground before her picture."

His companions then put their horns to their mouths, and sounded them three times. The mob answered them with their shouts, and when silence was restored, the savage resumed his speech :—

" With the first man who meets me, I will try a fall at wrestling, and I rede my antagonist, that he be strong and seasoned in the art, or he may rue his rashness.

" Let the second bring with him his quarter-staff upon his shoulder, and take good heed I do not crack his crown, and make him trail it.

" With the third, I will make trial to wrest the staff from him, or draw him over the line."

He then commanded his attendants to wind their horns again three times, and between the soundings he called aloud for some one to come forward, but no man answered the challenge.

" I weened it would be so," cried he, stalking disdainfully backwards and forwards in the front of the pavilion. " There is not a wight among them hardy enough to stand the gripe with me,—and, by the majesty of Fairy-land, they are the wiser, for ill he sleeps who sleeps with broken bones."

" This swaggering blade, for all his flouncing, is but a swash-buckler, in my estimation," said Fitzosborne.

" He is at best, as you see, a perfect savage," returned Fitzallen.

" I hope, however," interposed the Lady Eleanor, smiling, " some doughty champion will bring him to his daring-do, and clip his plumes before he leaves us."

" Certainly such a champion will come anon, my lady," returned Fitzallen. " Justice to the fair sex, and especially to the Lady Matilda and yourself, requires the savage to be punished."

Eleanor received the compliment with a smile, but was silent.

In the mean time, the baron's domestics had assembled round Morris, the mole-taker, who was esteemed the best wrestler at Tewin, being withal a man of great strength and courage, and they prevailed on him to enter the lists against the over-

grown braggadocio, and Sampson the smith, by way of encouragement, promised, if he proved unsuccessful, to have a bout with him at quarter-staff. When it was made known to the populace that Morris had accepted the challenge, they testified their joy by shouting, and casting their caps and bonnets into the air. Peretto, with his fellow minstrels, to give the greater solemnity to the contest, brought their champion to the place of trial with martial music, and sung a stanza from one of the songs of Rowland, to inspire them with valour. Morris entered the lists with an air of intrepidity, and, throwing off his surtunic, would no further divest himself on account of the ladies.

The assailants met each other, and, both having made sure of their gripe, the wrestling began. Morris exhibited much skill in counteracting the offers of his antagonist, and kept him at bay; for more than once he seemed to have him at advantage, but the savage as constantly recovered his position, when, observing that Morris became more eager in his attacks from these temporary flashes of success, he threw a temptation into his way, the unfortunate mole-catcher fell into the snare, when the savage, by a sudden shift of his standing, brought one of his legs beneath the other's hams, and threw him to the ground with such violence, that the blood started from his mouth and nostrils, so that he was taken away sore bruised and speechless from the field. The adoration of the picture, did not take place on account of the inability of the foiled hero to perform it.

Sampson, seeing how roughly his companion had been handled, repented that he had undertaken to succeed him; recollecting, however, that he could not forbear the contest without injuring his honour, and exposing himself to the ridicule of his companions, he determined to try his fortune, when, casting off the friar's cowl and gown, he appeared in a doublet of fustian, laced in the front with thongs of leather. The minstrels brought him forward with music and singing, as they had done the mole-taker, and he passed the front of the pavilion, bearing his quarter-staff upon his shoulder.

The savage man, seeing him approach, took his staff from the page who stood near him, and, poising it upon the thumb of his right hand elevated above his head, twirled it round like the sails of a mill, when, tossing it aloft, he caught it in its fall, and, thrusting one end to the ground, he surveyed his antagonist with an air of contempt, saying drily to his companions : " If this cockerel cannot carry his staff more coulthly, he had better trail it behind him, and, by giving up the contest, save a knave's sconce."

To which sareasm Sampson angrily replied, " By the soul of Saint Dunstan, I am not awaphed, though the moor-cock crew so loudly ! An' you take not good heed, goodman bell-swaggerer, I will crack a fool's costard before May-day be done."

The combat commenced; when much dexterity was manifested on both sides, and many sharp blows were given and received; but Sampson's comrades perceived from the beginning that the savage had the advantage of him, and manifestly possessed not only superior strength, but superior skill : however, they used every endeavour to encourage him, by their shouting and victories. The savage, having struck him with much violence upon

the left side, tossed his staff into the air, and catching it by the middle as it fell, to the great surprise of the spectators, flung it round before the other could recover himself, and struck him upon the head. The blow was decisive; for Sampson fell to the ground, covered with blood, and nearly deprived of his sense. His comrades flocked around him; and having washed the wound, and bound it up with a scarf, he recovered sufficiently to own himself conquered; and the savage insisted on his paying homage to the picture, which the crest-fallen smith was obliged, by the law of combats, to perform.

The savage, rejoicing in his double success, began to deride the spectators, saying, "Ye may remember a third trial of prowess remains unachieved; and well I ween, the disgrace that two of your champions have met with will afford but small encouragement for a third to risk his credit." He then commanded his men to wind their horns to the challenge, but no one appeared to answer it; they sounded again and again, but without effect.

"I heard," said he, "that a bold outlaw, bight Robin Hood, held his revels here this day. I wist to meet him at this stound; but, by the soul of my grand-dame, the jolly robber is not present; the knave has sent, I ween, some puling wench, in man's aguisement, to supply his place, and wends himself elsewhere."

The crowd now turned their eyes upon Peter Lanaret, the falconer, in expectation that he would have undertaken to chastise the boaster's insolence; but Peter, who was by no means equal in strength to Morris or Sampson, very prudently declined the contest. In fact, there was not one of the company who chose to come forward on the occasion.

The savage man, having uttered many taunting gibes and reproaches to no purpose, walked towards the pavilion, to take down the chaplet and the picture; when a clownish kind of man, in a loose tunic, with long traces of coarse borrel, came into the lists; he had a thrum bonnet on his head, with a cock's feather stuck in the top of it, and his face was concealed by a mask. The oddity of his appearance, and the rusticity of his deportment, excited the laughter of the spectators; which he not heeding, sternly commanded the savage not to remove the chaplet, saying, "Hold your hand, goodman savage, and let the garland be: I stood at this stound, weening some one more prow would heat ye; stint your prating. Silence the swains have been adawed by your big bason look, and wend aloof, I deem it anfit you should claim the guerdon without the achievement."

The appearance of the champion did not promise much sport to the spectators; however, they applauded his courage, and wished him success. The appellant surveyed him with great contempt, and threatened, after he had drawn him over the line, to bestow a good cudgelling upon him, as the best means of teaching him his proper place.

This menace exasperated the rustic, who seized the savage, and shook him violently, exclaiming, at the same time, "Tongue-doughty lozel, make sicker your own footing, or I may catch you at default." The savage was angry at being attacked in such an unusual manner, and the moment he had extricated himself from the gripe of the clown, caught up his staff to strike him; but the general voice of the people commanded him to forbear, and they began to entertain a more favourable opinion of the defendant's abilities.

A long crease was then cut upon the ground between the two assailants; and each, grasping an

end of a quarter-staff, pushed and tugged with all his might, to gain it to himself, or pull his antagonist over the mark. This contest continued much longer than any of the former, and was maintained with great vigour on both sides. The parties exhibited unusual skill, and alternately commanded the applause of the spectators. Victory, however, at last declared for the rustic, who, by an extraordinary exertion, drew the savage over the crease, threw him to the ground, and deprived him of his staff; when, setting his foot upon his breast, he elevated the weapon, saying, "Certes, Mister Scarebabe, you been in poor plight to apay me the blows you dempt my due, and may well forsay such deed. Perdie, the award is mine to send you to the leech with a broken rib or two for him to mend; but your evil stower abates my avengement. Algates I areed you, withouters let, to wend in humble guise to you gay arbour, and recant your selcouth leasings, craving forgiveness from the fair dames who are seated there. That done, get back to your native darkness, and take your queen with you; she shows herself by moonlight, as best becomes her; but the beauty of this country courts the day, and is heightened by the splendour of the sun."

"If my ears deceive me not," said Fitzosborne, in a whisper to the Lady Eleanor, "this borrel churl has changed his note on a sudden, and talks in the style of a polished gallant."

The lady replied, "He not only speaks well, but he has deported himself well, by silencing that ill-nurtured braggart, and supporting the honour of our sex."

The savage performed the task imposed on him by the conqueror: he recanted his errors upon his knees; and having obtained pardon from the ladies, he took down the tablet, and departed with his companions, stalking down the green amidst the tauntings and mockeries of the populace.

When the savage man was gone, the victor cast the quarter-staff upon the ground, and drawing forth a buglehorn which had been concealed beneath his tunic, he blew it skilfully, and the challenge was answered by the sound of trumpets from the upper part of the green; when a party of horsemen appeared, preceded by two heralds arrayed in rich tabards embroidered with silver and gold. As soon as this gay train had reached the borders of the enclosure, the rustic, kneeling upon one knee, addressed himself to the Lady Matilda, entreating her permission, and the permission of the other ladies in the assembly, for him and his comrades to run three courses at the ring in honour of the fair sex; and this gallant petition was readily granted.

"Do you not think, my dear cousin," said the Lady Eleanor, addressing herself to the baron's daughter, "that this same stranger is the best nurtured man for a borrel-dressing clown that ever you saw?"

"I trust," returned Matilda, with a smile, "the borrel husk, when cast, will produce a fair grain."

The heralds first entered the lists bareheaded; and sounding their trumpets, they were followed by five knights appalled in tilting habits; their hose and their doublets were of light blue velvet, branched with gold; their surcoats of silver bandakin, and their mantles of scarlet tyratime, fringed with gold; their bonnets of striped satin, edged with pearls; and their faces were covered with comely masks, adorned with long beards of gold wire. Behind them appeared six esquires, bareheaded, and in livery of blue velvet, with mantles of orange tawny satin. The knights and the esquires were well

mounted upon caparisoned horses; and the sixth esquire led a horse without the rider. They saluted the company as they passed the front of the pavilion, and when the horse unoccupied was brought up to the pretended rustic, he cast aside his tunic and traces of borrel, and presented himself to the spectators in a rich habit, resembling those of the other five knights, saving only that his was more splendid, and upon the breast of the surcoat was wrought, in goldsmith's work, the cognisance of the Boteler family; and beneath it, a heart transfix'd with an arrow, embroidered with crimson thread, surrounded with this motto, in letters of gold, "True to her I love." He leaped into the saddle with great agility, and kept his seat with so much ease and elegance, that he excited the astonishment of the men, and the commendation of the ladies. Every one was curious to learn his name; but no one could satisfy the inquiries of his companion. The Lady Matilda, particularly, was much surprised at seeing her family cognisance upon the surcoat of the stranger, for she was well assured, he and his companions were not her father's domestics: and she beckoned to the chamberlain, to learn from him the intention of the pageant. The old man, shrugging up his shoulders, assured her he was altogether in the dark; "for certes," quoth he, "our knaves areed me these chevaunaces are no part of their May-game gambols."

"This is passing strange," said the Lady Eleanor.

"Not at all, my lady," returned Fitzallen; "for beauty is never without its adorers."

Eleanor smiled at the young baron's remark; but Matilda blushed, and assumed an air of great seriousness.

In the mean time the heralds had dismounted, and prepared the lists for the performance about to take place. A long thick rope was stretched across the square, supported by stakes driven into the ground, and placed parallel to the front of the pavilion; at one end of the rope, a strong pole, about four yards high, was erected, and from it was suspended the ring, or small circle of brass; two small springs were affixed to the top of this ring, which, being pressed together, were thrust into a brazen socket, and retained there by the exertion of the springs, but so as to give way when the point of the lance was thrust through the ring, and permit it to be drawn out without risk of damaging the socket, or breaking the spear.

When these matters were perfectly adjusted, the six knights took the field, and every one receiving his lance from his respective esquire, ran in rotation singly at the ring; and the Knight of the Wounded Heart took his turn the last.

The first course was very brilliantly performed; for five knights bore away the ring, and the sixth struck it on the edge.

In the second course, the first knight's horse stumbled, and threw his rider, who received no hurt; but, according to the law of the pastime, he lost his turn. Of the other five, three struck the ring, and two carried it away.

In the third course, the ring was struck by two, and two bore it from the socket; the other two were altogether unsuccessful.

The heralds, whose office it was to register the success of all the candidates, declared that the victory was not decided, but lay between the Knight of the Wounded Heart and the fourth knight; for both of them had carried the ring three times, and in such cases, the laws of the sport required those who had been equally fortunate, to obtain permission

from the ladies, and perform three additional courses. The consent of the ladies was obtained, and the courses achieved. The fourth knight struck the ring twice, and carried it once; the Knight of the Wounded Heart struck it once, and carried it twice; and of course the victory was decreed to him. The heralds reserving the determination of the prize of honour (a garland of ivy intertwined with laurel to the ladies, the garland was put into the hands of the Lady Matilda, who, with the joint approbation of her female companions, adjudged it to their champion, who, leaping from his horse, was conducted by the heralds, sounding their trumpets, to the baron's daughter; and kneeling before her, he received from her fair hands the honourable prize. He then commanded the heralds to take down the chaplet which the savage man had hung up in the front of the pavilion, and presenting the same to the Lady Matilda, he said, "Fair Excellence, permit me, your unworthy but devoted champion, to solicit your acceptance of this chaplet; and humbly I entreat you to wear it in your own right, as the Sovereign Lady of the May." The young lady blushed, and was exceedingly confused at this unexpected address: she took the chaplet in her hand, unconscious of what she was doing, and the knight withdrew before she could return it; but, perceiving that his esquire had taken his horse from the lists, and that the barriers were stopped by his companions, who were passing through them, he leaped over the rope, without the least hesitation, to the great admiration of the gaping populace, and mounting his horse, rejoined the train; and they rode away full speed together, not affording the least opportunity for the company to discover who they were or whence they came.

The baron's fair daughter looked on in silence; the suddenness of the transaction greatly surprised her, and the adventure appeared like a vision. The greater part of the company, supposing that the whole of the pastime had been contrived by the baron's servants in honour of their young mistress, could not conceive why she should be so much affected by the conclusion; and some of them attempted to rally her on the success of her champion.

"Indeed," said she, endeavouring to resume her usual cheerfulness, "I know not to whom I am indebted for the flattering compliments that have been paid to me on this occasion: I am sensible I do not deserve them; they are, however, like the gaudy tinsel of this bauble, fair only while new, but soon fade away, and prove their own worthlessness."

"If the compliments, my dear cousin, be equally valuable with the chaplet," retorted the Lady Eleanor, taking it at the same time into her hand, "you have greatly under-rated them; for I am much deceived if this tinsel, as you call it, be not pure gold, and the embellishments true pearls and oriental diamonds. I never saw more exquisite workmanship than is displayed in the foliage, nor more elegance of design than appears in the disposition and intertwining of the branches. Indeed, my dear Matilda, this garland is a jewel of price, and worth the acceptance of the queen. For my part," added she, affecting to sigh, "I wish her majesty of Fairy-land would send another savage with another chaplet, and good fortune another knight to win them for me."

To this the baron's daughter gravely replied— "There shall not need, my dearest cousin, another savage nor another knight on this occasion; for if you be pleased with this gaudy ornament, you will

oblige me by your acceptance of it from me—and I beseech you to wear it for my sake."

"Not for the wealth of Fairy-land," replied the Lady Eleanor, hastily. "This jewel belongs to the Lady of the May. You are elected Lady of the May by the fair ordeal of a combat, and you only ought to wear it."

The observation made on the chaplet induced the company, who were near at hand, to examine it more minutely, and all of them agreed with the Lady Eleanor respecting its beauty, and its worth.

"It would become you well," said that lady to her cousin; "permit me, I pray you, to place it upon your head."

This Matilda positively refused, until it became the general request of the company that she should comply with the accustomed ceremony, which had at least the sanction of ancient usage in its favour, though contrary to her own inclination; and she at length gave way to the solicitations of her companions, and submitted to the inauguration.

When the golden chaplet was adjusted to her forehead the populace shouted; and at that instant an old man, with a long white beard, who had entered the enclosure with the train of the champion, and seated himself unnoticed at the right hand of the pavilion, rose up, and casting from him a large lyke, which had concealed his under dress, discovered himself to be a minstrel. He then produced his harp, and performed a prelude very skilfully. The attention of the people was excited by the music, and they were silent; when he sang the following verses with much melody, and accompanied his voice with the notes of the instrument:—

SONG.

From hill, from dell, or lucid spring,
Meand'ring through the flow'r-dight glade,
Where elves at midnight dance the ring:
Or from the deepest woodland shade,
Thee I invoke—thine be the hallow'd lay,
Sweet harmony—to praise the Queen of May!

'Wake with enchanting sounds the lyre;
Celestial music then shall flow:
Strike the full chord with soul-felt fire,
And bid the raptur'd bosom glow.
'Tis Beauty, peerless Beauty, claims the lay;
See where she sits—the Sov'reign of the May!

'Whate'er romantic fancy traced,
Warm from the heart, in Beauty's praise,
With energetic wildness graced
By bards of lore in ancient days,
Remember now, and tune the magic lay,
To greet the lovely Sov'reign of the May!

In Pagan land bright Beauty reigns,
And claims a worship there divine;
Th' unnatur'd savage wears her chains,
And bows devoted to her shrine.
Wide o'er the world is spread her sov'reign sway—
Hail, Beauty!—hail, fair Lady of the May!

Yet Beauty is a fading flow'r,
And oft untimely disappears;
Subject to change from hour to hour,
It cannot bide the test of years;
But constant virtue blossoms ev'ry day
In thy chaste bosom, Sov'reign of the May!

Virtue shall shine, the child of Truth,
To ceaseless ages, fair and free,

And claim eternity of youth

When Time himself must cease to be,

Let Virtue and let Beauty rule the day,
For both are thine—Matilda—Queen of May!

The old man having finished the song, arose from his seat amidst the plaudits of his auditors, when bowing to the baron's lovely daughter, he retired hastily through the crowd, and mounting a horse stationed for him near at hand, he rode away without soliciting any reward, as minstrels were accustomed to do.

This new event heightened the surprise of the Lady Matilda, and she took her cousin by the hand, saying, "I beseech you, my dearest Eleanor, let us return to Queenhoo Hall, for here we seem in truth to be in fairy-land, where wonders multiply upon wonders. I am not, however, disposed at present to witness any more of them."

The Lady Eleanor readily acquiesced with the request of her cousin; and having taken their leave of the company assembled in the pavilion, the two young ladies retired from the green, preceded by the chamberlain, and followed by a large train of servitors. The pavilion was soon afterwards cleared by the departure of the gentry, and the whole of the enclosure was given up to the rustics for the performance of their wonted pastimes; but as it was drawing towards evening, the dancing round the Maypole was shortened. Such of the villagers as had been actors in the first pageant, together with the handbell ringers, went up to Queenhoo Hall, where a mummery was to be exhibited; and others, who came from a distance, returned home.

The ladies reached Queenhoo Hall without any interruption; but the whole of their discourse was engrossed by the extraordinary adventures of the day. They canvassed over and over the several circumstances relative to the combat—they called to memory the names of all the young noblemen of their acquaintance without being able to fix upon any one of them to whom they could, with the least degree of certainty, attribute this effusion of gallantry.

The supper was served up, and removed again in a short time. The ladies had neither of them any great inclination to partake of it; and the baron's fair daughter was exceedingly thoughtful—when Gregory, the jester, being ushered into the room by the chamberlain, bowed obsequiously three or four times, and addressed the ladies in a set speech, composed by himself, with the assistance of Gilbert, the schoolmaster, to this effect:—

"Most illustrious and most incomparable ladies, transcendent paragons of beauty, and superlative patterns of virtue and nobleness, be it known unto your honours, that the varlets of the village, and your own egregious knaves, have prepared for your graces' amusement a dance and a mummery, as aforetime it hath been customary to set forth in honour of the May. And I, your honours' most unworthy gentleman and most humble servant, am delegated in the name of our company, to parley for them, and to solicit your august ladyships to shine upon our poor performances, and illuminate our rustic show by the lively emanations of the radiant beams from your bright countenances. So shall we hold ourselves bounden to pray for the welfare and solace of your excellencies for ever."

"And amen, good Gregory," said the Lady Eleanor. "I wonder you forgot that."

"I could not forget it, my lady," replied the jester, "because I did not learn it, and I did not learn it because it was not penned down in my speech; but if your honour thinks it proper, I will repeat the oration, and add the amen with all my heart."

"You shall not give yourself that trouble on my account," said Eleanor; "and I dare venture to say your lady my cousin is perfectly satisfied. But, most illustrious Gregory, in your incomparable harangue, you tell us that mumming at May tide is agreeable to ancient custom. On the contrary, it appears to me this sport has no sanction from prescription, excepting it be holden at the festival of our Lord's nativity, and the holidays subsequent, and when properly conducted is under the direction of the Lord of Misrule, or the Twelfth-night, King of the Bean."

"This misweening, my lady," quoth Gregory, "arises from lack of coining in antick usages; but, had I one well skilled in such leir to hold debate with me, I would, by craft of rhetoric, confront him by such provings as he might not gainsay."

"And whom can we find," said the Lady Eleanor, "more fitting to handle such an argument than the chamberlain, who, in the absence of the seneschal, is master of the ceremonies, and well acquainted with precedents?"

"Gramercy, my lady," returned the jester, "you will stint the debate at a word, if your choice shall fall upon Oswald; for he, I trow, is well avised, and cannot gainsay me."

"Hasty conclusions, friend Gregory," said the chamberlain, "are often false;—and such is that you have made at this stound; for, certes, I agree with the Lady Eleanor."

"Why then," quoth the jester, "I will gage my new-gilt bauble against your satin cap and feather, (and the odds, you wot well, are largely in your favour,) that I will proven you devoid of advisement in antick glee games; and their ladyships shall award the mastery."

"I shall not stoop at this time to take up the gauntlet," said the chamberlain, gravely; "for, certes, I am not in the humour for fooling."

"Pardie, that is a selcouth saying," retorted the jester, "and not well worthy of credence. I beseech you twirl this bauble as I do: it will then be said you have played the fool once in your lifetime, and sithence I will proven that you have overdone me at my own craft."

"That conclusion is at least paradoxical," said the Lady Eleanor.

"Not a whit, my lady," quoth the jester, "and I arseed you to note the answer. It is said he plays the fool but once in his lifetime; and well ye may wot, that once signifies all the time he has lived, or that he is a fool by nature:—my occupation requires me to play the fool, and ye say I often do so; by this ye may understand I have some vacations from folly."

"It is shrewdly answered," said the lady.

"The knave," quoth Oswald, "shoots at random: but he shoots often, and, paravaunt, unwittingly may strike the mark."

"The toad has spit its venom without noyance," answered the jester, "and if your pannikel, Sir Gravity, were set for a mark, I would 'vise you to beware of a second bolt I am about to dis-

charge. And now, my lady, permit me to say a word or two on the disport of mumming:—And first, we may learn that a mummer is a person in disguise, or one who personates another; as thus, when his lordship's minstrels and playmen set forth their moralities, and enterlodes, they are in disguisements, some like kings, some like great barons, some like ladies, some like angels, some like devils, and some like wild beasts; and what are these but mummers? Now ye wot well, these enterlodes are performed on divers occasions, and at divers times, as at Easter, and at Whitsuntide, and other great festivals and merry-makings. And to-day, saw you not many mummers, such as jolly Robin and his bold outlaws, one of them in semblance of a miller, another in guise of a friar, myself as a hobby-horse, and Peter Parker like a dragon? Those disguisements belong to the Mayday pageant, and require the Maypole, and the Maypole requires them, and are the disport of oiden times; for Maypoles, I warrant, were set up in Paynim days: and ancient saws set forth, that King Arthur, so famous for his doughty deeds, took upon him the part of Robin Hood; and his valiant comrades, the Knights of the Round Table, became mummers to dance about the Maypole. Sithence, I trow, ye may conclude that mumming on Mayday is of right antick usage."

"Bating a trifling anachronism relating to the celebrated British hero, you have, friend Gregory," said the Lady Eleanor, "well supported your argument;"—and, taking the baron's fair daughter by the hand, she thus addressed herself to her:—"Come, my dear Matilda, now it has been proved that we shall be acting in consonance with the customs of our ancestors, let us, I pray you, walk into the hall."

The Lady Matilda sought to excuse herself, declaring that she was fatigued already, and had not the least relish for any addition to the pastimes. The Lady Eleanor would not admit of any excuse:—"You are growing," said she, "more grave than usual, and giving way to melancholy. I promoted the argument which Gregory has so sagely discussed, to make you smile, but without effect; besides, you must go, or the performers will be most cruelly disappointed, who ardently expect to be honoured by your presence."

"I cannot deny you any thing," returned the lady with a smile; "but in truth I was never less disposed for merriment than at this moment."

So saying, she permitted her cousin to lead her into the hall, preceded by the chamberlain, who ceremoniously conducted them to their places. They were followed by Gregory, who, quaintly aping the state assumed by the chamberlain, afforded great amusement to the spectators. When the ladies were seated, six young men, clothed in light orange-coloured tunics, guarded upon the sleeves with blue ribbons, appeared, bare-headed, and every one of them held a hand-bell in each hand. They came into the middle of the hall, and rang a variety of changes; and the performance was much commended by the ladies. At the conclusion of the peal, this song was sung to the music of the bells:—

When full in prime the pulse is strong,
And wanton youth hails mirth and song;
Cares avaunt, and fears alarming!—
Joy abounds, with pleasures charming.

Chorus, with the bells.
How sweetly then the changes ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

But when bright youth shall fade away,
And age transmew the black locks grey ;—
When tott'ring stops the staff demand,
And palsies shake the head and hand ;
The sprightly changes cease to ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

The carol blithe and dancing gay
No longer claim the holiday ;
But time a doleful story tells,
The bell-rope breaks, and cracks the bells ;—
The bells that did so cheerly ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

The deep-ton'd tenor tolls the knell,
A summons for departure home ;
Of life it is the curfew-bell,
And heavily it sounds, boam ! boam !
One, one dull bell no charge can ring,
With heigh down, ho down, ding dong ding.

"This song, my dear Matilda," said the Lady Eleanor, "is the work of a knavish kind of poet: the beginning was so cheerful, that I was almost inclined to rise and dance a measure; but the close is so dismal, that positively it makes me melancholy."

Before the baron's fair daughter could return, an answer, the ringers struck up again; and, bowing to the ladies, retreated to the bottom of the hall, where they imitated the falling of the bells, and then withdrew.

They were succeeded by twelve damsels, habited in white plaited rochets, with girdles of Coventry blue; and their heads were adorned with garlands of primroses, intermixed with cowslips. After they had danced a short time, they were joined by a like number of young men dressed in green tunics, resembling foresters, every one of them having a buglehorn suspended from his left shoulder by a baldrick of silver tissue; their hose were of watchet-coloured fustian, and their caps were of crimson taffety, ornamented with peacock's feathers.

At a certain period of the dance, they sounded their horns, and suddenly there appeared, at the bottom of the hall, six uncomely figures, in the forms of lions, tigers, and bears:—the women seemed to be frightened, and as the mummers approached, drew up six in a company on either side of the ladies; and three of the men, drawing their daggers, stood on the one side, and a second three on the other side, as though it were to protect them from danger; at the same time, the remaining six foresters, drawing also their daggers, attacked the beasts, and every man, having overcome the animal he fought with, cast him upon the ground, and ripping open the disguisements, they were all uncased, and six pages, in their proper habits, arose, and joined the dance. The music was performed by Peretto, the minstrel, with his associates; and, the dance being concluded, the dancers formed themselves into two rows, and between them Robin Hood and his companions passed in procession, as they had done on the green. And so ended the celebration of the *May-games*.

CHAPTER II.

A Scene at a Country Alehouse.

The reader may well suppose, that the surprising adventures that took place at the celebration of the *May-games*, and the splendid victory achieved by the unknown champion, occasioned much conversation, and gave rise to various conjectures among the different ranks of spectators—this was really the case. Among the ladies, some thought him of low degree, and said the baron's daughter affected prudery, in order to conceal her attachment to him; others considered his conduct as an effusion of youthful gallantry; others laughed, and whispered, one to another, as though they knew more of the secret than the rest of the company; and others, again, who saw more of the beauty in their mirrors than in the countenance of the Lady Matilda, thought he had manifested much deficiency of discernment by the preference he had given to her. Many of the old dames of the village, who accredited the stories of witches and hobgoblins, took the whole of the adventure for an illusion of the foul fiend; others said, the stranger was the wandering fairy Robin Goodfellow, or some such merry sprite, and that all his attendants were elves or goblins; these good souls retired from the green, crossing themselves, and counting their beads with great devotion, saying a paternoster or an avemary or two, and carefully coining over their night-spell, as the best preservative against the danger of enchantment, and to prevent their being goblin-led. But, though no one knew who the champion was, yet the men in general applauded his courage, and the females agreed in praising his figure, his acuteness, and the gentility of his deportment.

Shortly after the conclusion of the *May-day* pastimes, when the evening was set in, certain of the inferior spectators, as Hugh, the carrier, Pierce, the potter, Wat Coulter, the ploughman, and some others of their merry companions who loved the ale-can, agreed to go to Hob Filcher's, at the Crown, on the Lower Green, "where," says Hugh, "these stranger folk stopped in their way; and I will wager a cross or two if occasion requires, that Hob knows more of the matter than any of us. So be we make him mellow with his own ale, he will tell us all for the guerdon." This said, away they went; and thither, with the reader's permission, we will follow them.

Our jovial company, being come to the Crown, found Robin Tospot, the butcher's man, Jack, the basket-maker, of Wellwyn, and some other lusty drinkers, already assembled there; and in the midst of the room sat Bernard, the blind bagpiper, of Hartford, who was playing a fit of music; and when he had done, Gillys, the juggler, started up and said, "By the bones, my masters, but if you would see a sight well worth the guerdon, I am the man who can quit you. Would you see any legerdemain or cleanly conveyance, called by the learned clerke deceptio visus; because, my masters, if your eyes are not as quick as my hands, I shall put the changeling upon you. There," added he, throwing a crab-apple upon the table, "what call you that, I prithee?"

"Out upon thee for a loxel!" said Tospot; "dost think we be such seely lobs as not to know a crab?"

"To be sure—why not?" replied the juggler; "wiser men than you have been deceived. Look ye, my masters, all fair play, and above board,—I will show you, for a teater, more craft, and as cleanly cast, as John Rikell, the king's tregetour, will for two angels of gold. You see, I cover this crab with this cup of latten; and you," addressing himself to Tospot, "clap your hand upon it, and hold it down, for fear the apple should be gone." Robin readily obeyed, looking slyly at his comrades; and the juggler continued his harangue:—"Hark ye, my masters, if my familiar deceive me not, I will send this poor John a-nutting on Holyrood-day to meet the foul fiend."

"Ay marry," cried Robin, "you talk main well, master juggler; but I ben't to be cουsened so easily as you think for."

"Certainly not," said Gillys, "for here is the crab, my masters," holding it up in the sight of the company:—

"Then let the sot
Uncover the pot,
And see what a dainty fine apple he's got."

"For all your bantering," said Robin, "I have another crab under the cup, I trow;" but, raising it from the table, there appeared, to the great astonishment of the spectators, in place of the apple, a young howlet.

"I thought how it would be, my masters," quoth the juggler; "birds of a feather flock together: and the woodcock is fairly springed."

Robin looked very foolish, and his comrades burst into a roar of laughter. The owl, being frightened by the noise, flew from the table, and perched upon one of the shelves.

"You shall now see, said Gillys, "that I can readily bring my hawk to the lure;" when, imitating the hooting of an owl, the bird flew down to him, and he put it into a pouch which hung by his side. The clowns were wonderfully delighted with this performance; but Tib, the innkeeper's wife, believing the owl to be in reality an evil spirit, counted her beads, and crossed herself for security's sake.

"And now, my good masters," continued the juggler, clapping a box upon the table, "I have here a jack-in-the-box, the greatest curiosity ever seen in this or any other country. This wonderful motion has travelled farther than Noah's ark. It was exhibited, with unspeakable applause, to Mahound, Soldan of Constantinople, when he dined with the Emperor Sigismund, at the palace of the Seneschal of Nineveh, where the Dolphin of France tilted with the Prince of Fess for the fair Sabrina, daughter to the Queen of Bohemia. The King of Spain preferred it to all the tricks set forth by ten select companies of minstrels. All the crowned heads in Europe speak highly of its merit; and our own gracious Sovereign was so delighted with it, that he commanded me to play it over five times, and gave ten marks for my reward; and his excellency the Protector, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, gave me two angels of gold from his own private purse."

So saying, he handed his bonnet round among the rustics, to collect their donations; but, finding they did not communicate very liberally, he added, "Maister John Rikell, the king's tregetour, offered me fifty pounds in gold, and a place

next to himself in his company, for this admirable motion; but I warrant ye, my masters, I refused him, and would have refused him had he offered twice as much, for the whole world cannot produce its fellow. Why should you, then, by withholding a few pence, deprive yourselves of a sight you never may have another opportunity of seeing?"

He then put his bonnet about a second time; and when he had collected all the money together that he could, he opened the box, and produced the puppet, dressed like a Moorish lady. Bernard played a tune appropriated to the purpose upon the juggler's vielle, and Gillys caused the figure to perform all the motions of a dance in such a manner as surprised his spectators, who expressed their satisfaction by reiterated applause. The performance being ended, the juggler and his companion were preparing to depart, when Hugh, the carrier, having collected three-pence more, called for a song. Gillys took the money; and, playing himself upon the vielle, was accompanied by Bernard upon the bagpipes; and, after a short prelude, he sang the following verses:—

SONG.

Fill to the brim this lusty can
With double ale and stout;
The wight I deem not half a man
Who dare not see it out.

Chorus.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown:
Fill it here,—fill it there:
Every one shall have his share.

The burly knight is sick, they say;
The friar's ill at ease;
The serving-man is drunk to-day;
And all have one disease.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

Then, if the men who wear the hood
No sin in drinking find,
Let's hold, such practice must be good,
And leave no drop behind.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

But give the churl a winding-sheet,
Who from his drink will fly:—
Let him, the hungry worms to treat,
In yonder churchyard lie.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

And o'er his carcase cast a stone,
To keep the niggard there:
He well deserves to lie alone,
Who poisons joy with care.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

But lightly may the green sod lie
O'er us with daisies dight,
When death shall drain our last bowl dry,
And bid us say, Good night!
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

And, fellow-topers, when the wake
Or church-ale calls you nigh,
O'er us libations largely make,
To greet us merrily.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown, &c.

What, shough with linen shroud y-bound,
And on our cold bed laid,
Our sprites may hail the welcome sound,
And own the duty paid.
Heigh ho, the ale so brown;
Fill it here,—fill it there:
Every one shall have his share.

"By Saint Runyan," cried Robin, "I would not give a stewed pruin for such another song! It is as long as a vesper, and as dull as a homily: as I am a true man, it smells of Lent, when Sir John, the curate, talks of penance, and ends as mollencholly as a dirge. Go to, I'll sing you a song, my masters."

"Ay marry, that's another matter," said the host; "why, Robin, you be a very dragon at a song;—your voice is so loud, it will frighten the bowlets;—it would make a rare second to the roaring of Grim the miller's waterfall."

"The fool's bolt is shot, I trow," answered Robin; "look you to your tankard, goodman gorbelly: this ilk song, you may ween, was sung in the enterloot-play at Saint Mary's church by one of the merry wags with a blue beard, who thrust the three barns into the fiery oven. Allen, our parish-clerk, penned it down, and I gave him a stoop of strong ale to con it from him. It has a burden; and you mun all bear a part with me, or it will be stark naught. Judge now fairly, my masters:—

SONG.

Bring hither ale—both stout and stale,
Nor let me stinted be;
I never think—but how to drink;
And drinking should be free.

Chorus.
Then trowl the bowl:
Wesheal to every thirsty soul.

The merry sprite—who walks by night,
Good Fellow, well you know,
Was once a man,—true to his can,
Like us, my hearts, I trow.
Then trowl the bowl, &c.

But when the clay—he'd wash'd away,
That once his body fram'd;
All light was he,—and full of glee,
Hobgoblin justly nam'd.
Then trowl the bowl, &c.

Come, drink away—both night and day;
Let not our throats be dry:
And so shall we—transformed be
To elves, and never die.
Then trowl the bowl:
Wesheal to every thirsty soul.

"By the blood," cried Hob Filcher, "but it is well done! Robin's song for my money. Give's your hand, my heart: you and I are stanch, back and edge: we shall make rare elves, and bask all night upon the warm hearth by the glowing embers of the Christmas log, and when we fling away at the crowing of the cock, drop a cross of silver into the shoo of the cleanly housewench; but, by the Lord of Lincoln, we will soundly catterclaw the idle queans who leave us a dirty house to range in." The juggler, finding that there was

no chance of drawing any more coin from the company, wished them good night, and departed with his companion towards Hertford.

After they were gone, the can went merrily round; and Hob, the innkeeper, who had drunk pretty freely, began to reel; when Hugh, clapping him upon the shoulder, said, "Come, my jolly host, sing us your favourite song,

"Here is a pot of nappy good ale,
As clear as crystal, neat and stale."

"A fig for the favourite," quoth Hob; "give me a stoop of clary; that is my favourite."

"In good time," returned Hugh; "but let us have the song first."

"Say no more about it," cried Hob, "for I am as hoarse as a cuckoo in June: and, by the blood, I will not sing for the best king's son in Christendom; but an' it be for drinking, my hearts, body of me, you shall not find my peer in ten parishes."

"That's a goodly jape in sooth," quoth Hugh; "do we not all know that Toatspot can fight you at that weapon, and baffle ye by odds?"

"By the blood, thou art a false knave to say so," answered the host: "am I not the imp's master? did I not first instruct him in the mysteries of the ale-pot, and teach him to turn off his bowl with good discretion?"

"Truce with your bickering," cried Robin; "Hob is talking of my noose, when I was a puling boy, and wore a chain unledged; but by the Lord of Lincoln, if he dare cast the gauntlet now, I am his man. Look you, my masters, if he provoke me to my daring-do, I will empty his cellars before the prime bell rings, and mar his occupation for two moons to come!"

"Marry come up," quoth Hob, "the ban-dog bays most furiously; but he has lost his teeth, my hearts: an I had the lozel foot to foot till cock-crowing, I'd make him stare worse than the juggler did after his howlet." This sarcasm produced a general laugh, and Robin made no reply.

The conversation afterwards turned upon the May-game, and Hob Filcher declared, that it wanted many knackeries to be complete—"For George, the pinner of Wakefield," said he, "was not there, nor Bettris, his leman, nor Will Scarlet, the jolly Shropshire man. When I was a boy we had another guess May-game. I have laughed till I cracked my sides to see Robin Hood break the potter boy's pipkins, and fight with the potter."

"That strain," said Jack of Wellwyn, "is in the enterloot, and I warrant me was rarely enacted by the play folk at Saint Alban's. But what say you, Hob, to the savage man, who so mawled poor Morris, the mole-taker, and knocked Sampson over the sconce with as little ruth as thof he'd been in the smithy, and smiting at the anvil; what mister wight was he?"

"Body o'me," returned the host, "he is a lusty revelour, I warrant me, with his merrymen all in a row. They called here anon before the fight, and eat and drank like roysters; and when the reckoning was coned, the jolly savage thrust into my hand a noble more than the costs. He weaned I did not know him; but by the bones I kenned him right well, for I noted him when he doffed his ugly visor to drink; but I was as mute as a fish—you know my guise—and wean ye well, my hearts, he is no elfin wight, but a roaring blade. He

wonnes not in Goblin-land, but in the land of abundance—in the king's own house I trow. Why, do ye thin that I should forget my former playmate, Jaques Duseday."

"Duseday," cried Jack of Wellwyn with surprise. "What, Duseday, the famous prize-fighter?"

"The same," answered Hob, "and none other, or I am a knave, my hearts."

"He you mean," quoth Jack, "who turneyed at chop and foyne with sharp brands against Mudge, the cudgel player, before the king at Saint Alban's."

"He is no changeling, I tell you," said the host.

"By the Lord of Lincoln," continued Jack, "I am nought astouned that Morris fared so foully, and our comrade Sampson may well bid his beads for escaping with a broken coxcomb. Why this fire-drake is masterman in the company of jugglers belonging to John Rikell, the king's tregétour; he is the scarecrow of the country. By the rood, I marvel hugely who this same borrel beetle, transmewed into a silken butterfly, might be, that stinted the juggler's boasting, and made his big bones cry twang ho; how hight ye him, mine host?"

To this Hob replied, "I ween, my hearts, he was the foul fiend benemped Beelzebub. He came, I trow, from Sathan's paradise, and I hope he is gone to purgatory."

"By the Lord of Lincoln," cried Jack, "you have said sooth for the nonce: He must have been the devil or Friar Rush, to have yshent the juggler so reproachfully."

"That same borrel knight," said Hugh, "be-nemp him how ye may, was a tall man and a brave——"

"He a tall man?" cried Hob; "the foul fiend affray him, he is a carle, a princox. I tell ye, my hearts, this tall man, with his gay train as crank as peacock, passed my doors without giving me the good day, or hansting a single cross with me for lack's sake."

"Marry, that was a shrewd ill guise of his," cried Tosspot; "for I hold no wight stalworth and true who passes a taverne's bush without tasting his wine. He is a knave, in my liking, who cannot trowld his bowl orderly, or refuses the wassheal when the pot is thrust towards him."

"By the blood, my jolly heart," quoth Hob, "we be beth of one mind. Look at Jaques Duseday, he is a man at all points: he never refuses to pledge his fellow; he smacks his lips like a lusty blood after a deep draught, and calls out amain—let us have no stinting, my masters. I warrant I lost six or eight marks by his downfall. I looked for him back again, but he coursed away like a fox from the hounds; or we should have been merry as grige, and the ale and the clary had flowed as from a fountain."

By this time the clowns began to find their heads well stored with the fumes of the liquor; and Hugh, the carrier, whose business required his attendance early in the morning, rose up, saying, "I ween, my masters, we shall learn no more at this tide respecting the borrel knight; he is an azen stranger to us all—"

"And so let him be," quoth Robin, interrupting him; "I care not he be an'elf, a ghost, or the man o' the moon; he will not, I trow, put one cross into my pouch, nor set a bowl of clary upon

the table. Come, hostess, fill the can; we'll take t'other bout, and let the right sow claim her own pig for me."

"I'll have no more," retorted Hugh; "the night wears apace, and I must be off for London by the prime."

"And as I live," said Jack of Wellwyn, "my brains are in a maze; the world turns round like a whirligig, as the stromers sayen, and if I tarry much longer, I shall peradventure walk wide of the path, and roll into the gravel pit in Lochly warren."

"I guessed how 'twould be," exclaimed Robin, pettishly; "it is ever your guise when you get into the marrow of good fellowship, to slink off like cravens, and leave me in the lurch. What, you will go? then the foul fiend take you to fool's purgatory! Here is Hob Flcher and I, we never flinch. Come, dame, bring me a crab from the fire, and we'll see the bottom of this can before cock crowing; and then I'll crawl home as merry as a cricket."

The reckoning being paid, the company departed, singing as they went, excepting Robin, who, with his friend Hob, were seated in the chimney corner with a full can of ale before them; and Tit, the innkeeper's wife, fell fast asleep in the great chair.

CHAPTER III.

Conversation between the Ladies—A Morning Walk—An Adventure.

When the mummery and dancing were concluded, the baron's fair daughter withdrew to her chamber, accompanied by her lovely cousin, who assisted her in removing the chaplet from her head.

"I have hardly seen it," said she, taking it into her hands; and when she had carefully reviewed it, she expressed her surprise at the richness and elegance of the ornaments, and added, "Indeed I have been to blame for giving encouragement to these May-games; this adventure, of course, will become the common talk of the village. Ignorance may give origia to many misrepresentations of the fact, and malice may take the advantage to interpose its unmerited censures."

"To none, my dearest cousin," returned the Lady Eleanor, "that can cast the least blemish upon your character, and therefore, I beseech you, be not in the least uneasy upon that account. The world, with all its petulence, is not unreasonable enough to blame you for the fault, if fault there be, of your unknown lover."

"Lover!" retorted the Lady Matilda; " fie, fie!"

"Not in the least," answered her cousin, "for every one will naturally believe the chevalier's own declaration; he professed publicly his adoration—he overcame the savage for your sake—he laid the reward of his achievement at your feet, and hailed you the Sovereign of the May. In my mind now, my dear Matilda, this unknown woe, for such I hold him to be, has deported himself like a puissant and an accomplished hero, being desperately in love, as a true knight ought to be, and as debonair as though Sir Tristrem, the flower of courtesy, had been his tutor."

"Your merriment, my good cousin, is altogether untimely! I do not wish to hear any more of this jack-a-lantern."

The serious manner in which the Lady Matilda expressed herself, joined with the oddness of the concluding phrase, made her cousin laugh, and, with an air of pleasantry, she replied, "You do the champion wrong, my fair lady, to confound him with a mischievous goblin. I am much deceived if he be not made with flesh and blood, like other men; and peradventure he is the heir-apparent of some great king or mighty emperor; so, through his persevering spirit, the daughter of Lord Boteler may become a queen or an empress. It will, however, be positively necessary, according to the established rules of chivalry, for the dear unknown prince to take you away by stealth, in the dead of the night, from Queenhoo Hall, marry you at Bramfield oratory; and, notwithstanding all the inquiries made after you by the baron, your father, and all the outcries I of course must make upon the occasion, you and your august consort, after escaping ten thousand imminent dangers, shall reach the capital of his vast dominions at a time when all the world give him over for lost, and his venerable father is erecting a cenotaph to his memory. The grey-headed old man will die suddenly for joy at seeing his son returned; the prince and you will deluge the earth with tears for the loss of such an excellent parent; and the next day your joint coronation will take place, with every due solemnity, when tournaments and jousts will be exhibited upon the happy occasion—the bells ringing, bonfires blazing, cresset lights streaming, conduits running wine, and the populace rejoicing, with such pomp and such pageantry as never was seen before. And will not all this, my dear Matilda, be mightily fine?"

"And mightily consistent withal," returned the Lady Matilda.

"It is very unreasonable in you," said Eleanor, "to expect consistency in a romance. The very essence of legendary chivalry is to exceed the bounds of congruity; for if an author permits his hero to eat, to drink, to sleep, or to perform any of the functions of life like a reasonable being, he degrades his romance to a common history, and his hero to a common man. Every thing in romance must be wild, imaginary, and unnatural. A true knight will live twenty years at a stretch in a dark dungeon, with no other food than rats and mice, and without sleeping; but, when he takes it into his head to exert his strength, for wonderment sake, he will burst his adamantine chains asunder, beat down the prison door with his fist, beat out the gaoler's brains with one of the bars, and kill a thousand or two of Pagan kempy men, who are appointed to guard him, and then walk off in triumph, as sleek and as fresh-coloured as Cecil, his lordship's butler. The heathen daughter of the Soldan of Persia, who chances to be passing by at the time, falls instantly in love with this puissant hero, turns Christian to oblige him, and follows him through the world, leaving her aged father to curse his false gods, tear his milk-white hair, and break his hard heart with sorrow for her departure. And trust me, my dearest cousin, when you shall become an heroine, as the prospect before you seems to promise, all things will wear a different aspect in your eyes; cottages will be changed into palaces

—palaces into enchanted castles—the possessors into giants—their wives and their daughters into ladies in distress—their servants into dwarfs—their dogs into dragons—and their hawks into griffins. And when your puissant consort shall think it requisite, for no possible reason that I can divine but to reconceive you of his prowess, to leave his peaceful dominions, and seek abroad for perilous adventures, how delightful will it be for you, riding upon a stately palfrey by his side, or mounted behind him, so be it please you better so to travel, as the old ditty has it—

Over bog, over mire,
Through bush, and through brier,
And gloomy forests far astray,
Where never hapless wight,
By daytide nor by night,
Explor'd the dark and devious way.

I, alas! have no such splendid fortune falling to my lot. No champion, prow and full of hardihood, to become my protector, and lead me through the wide world, killing of two headed giants, or flying serpents, or fiery dragons—or putting to flight whole hosts of fearful hobgoblins—and all for my amusement."

"If these sarcastic effusions of your gaiety, my dearest cousin, afford you pleasure, go on with them," said the Lady Matilda; "but, for my part, I do not find the least amusement in them. Indeed, my mind is ill at ease; and the more I reflect upon the untoward occurrences of the day, the more my thoughts are bewildered, and my anxiety increased."

She paused for a moment; when, taking her cousin by the hand, she, heaving an involuntary sigh, added, "I sincerely wish I had borne no part in them. But it is now approaching apace to midnight, and if you please, my cousin, we will go to our beds."

The Lady Eleanor readily complied with her proposal, hoping that rest would be more conducive to the removal of the lady's disquiet, than the continuation of her rairiesses.

The next day the Lady Matilda arose at an early hour; she had slept but little, her mind being agitated by the events of the preceding afternoon. Perceiving the morning to be exceedingly serene and beautiful, she called to her cousin, who slept in an apartment which communicated with her own, and desired to know if a walk before breakfast would be agreeable. "The sky," said she, "is unclouded; the little birds are singing in the thickets; and every thing that is charming in rural retirement invites us abroad."

"With all my heart," replied the Lady Eleanor; "it is indeed a delightful morning, and I have been awake some time listening to the notes of a thrush that is carolling in the garden, not far removed from my window."

When they were prepared for their excursion, the baron's fair daughter proposed a visit to the Park Lodge. "I put," says she, "a manile of sendal into the hands of the ranger's daughters when I left Tewin, in order that it might be embroidered by them; I do not indeed suppose they can have finished the work by this time, but I am desirous of seeing what progress has been made: the border, my dear cousin, consists of a running sprig, embellished with foliage and flowers, and the pattern was designed and drawn by myself."

"I know," returned the Lady Eleanor, "you draw very finely; and as I have never seen this pattern, I will readily accompany you thither."

"You are a flatterer, my cousin, and greatly over-rate my poor abilities," said Matilda, blushing: "the design has nothing uncommon to recommend it; but you shall see it with all its faults." So saying, they proceeded to Parker the ranger's habitation.

Upon their arrival, the Lady Matilda was much surprised to find the embroidery upon the mantle not only completed, but the work was executed in a manner superior to the young women's usual performances. The Lady Eleanor declared, that she knew not which deserved the greatest praise, the elegance of the pattern, or the excellency of the needlework. "This diligence ought to be rewarded," said the baron's fair daughter. And putting her hand into a gipsey hanging from her girdle, she drew out an angel of gold, which she presented to the eldest girl, desiring her to share it with her sisters.

"Certes," quoth the damsel, curtseying as she received the money, "this guerdon exceeds our poor deserving; the work, so please your ladyships, you deem so quaintly wrought, is purfled by one more couthful at the needle than we be."

"And who is this excellent workwoman?" returned the lady.

"She is a stranger," answered the girl.

When Dame Alice, her mother, interfering, said, "And such a stranger—may our holy lady protect her! she looks like an angel sheen. Certes, excepting yourself and the Lady Eleanor, I have not seen her peregal; nor shall I see it in twenty parishes, I trow."

"You much astonish me," replied the Lady Matilda; "inform me, I beseech you, who she is, and how she became your guest."

Dame Alice resumed her speech with these words: "I remember well, upon the vigil of Saint Thomas, the blessed martyr of Kent, Sir John, our curate, ar-redded us, that evil hap betides the best of folks; sithence the holy saint's have had their tines and their tosts, and we ought not to be abashed by selcouth fortune; albe, it is a shrewd evil stour when so charming a rosebud, so gent a damozel, so noble a lady, is buffeted at hoodman-blind by a naughty world."

"You call her a lady, and tell us she is noble," said the baron's fair daughter, interrupting the old woman: "hence, I presume, she claims the privileges of rank and ancestry."

"And soothlich to sayen," rejoined Dame Alice, "they are her due, and with them large estates; but right is oft impeached by might, and so the poor chicken is pilled of its barley." At this instant the sound of a lute was heard. "She is going to carol," continued the good dame; "her window is open, and your ladyships may hear her better in the porch." The young ladies went thither; and after a short prelude, the stranger sang the following verses to a very plaintive tune:—

To thee, O soul-possessing power,
Sad Melancholy, shall belong
The thoughts that fill each wakeful hour,
And day by day my hopeless song.

But why—when unawares I close
These eyelids, overpress'd with grief,—
Am I a stranger to repose,
And find not in my sleep relief?

For then terrific visions rise;
On precipices steep I stand;

And, falling, cast around my eyes
For help,—but find no helping hand.

In wild affright, perchance I hear,
Arou'd from sleep, the midnight bell:—
With horror chill'd, I drop a tear,
And cry,—it is my Henry's knell!

She ceased, and the admiration of the ladies was much increased; for both of them declared they had never heard the lute more skilfully touched, nor more sweetness and delicacy of vocal expression exerted, than in the performance of this plaintive lay. Their curiosity was redoubled to learn her name and family; but the renewal of their inquiries was interrupted by the sudden appearance of the fair musician herself. She came hastily into the room, with the intention of speaking to the park-keeper's eldest daughter; when her eyes meeting those of the young ladies, she blushed, and, curtseying, besought them to pardon her intrusion; "for indeed," said she, "I did not know that my good dame was engaged with such noble visitants."

She was about to withdraw, but Lady Eleanor prevented it, by taking hold of her hand: and having assured her that no apology was necessary, she said, "Permit me, my dear lady, to introduce you to the Lady Matilda, daughter of Lord Boteler."

The lovely stranger curtseyed a second time; and Matilda, with great affability, returned her politeness, begged to be favoured with her acquaintance; telling her, at the same time, how much herself and her cousin had been delighted by the air and music they had just now overheard.

The fair stranger blushed at the commendation, and modestly replied, "Indeed, ladies, I was altogether unconscious that I had any other hearers than those of this good family, who never interrupt me, or I should have forborne my complaining, and sighed in silence."

"I am therefore exceedingly glad," returned the baron's daughter, "that our visit was unknown to you, not only because it would have deprived us of the entertainment we have already received, but also because it might have lost us the opportunity of soliciting your acquaintance." The stranger replied with great propriety, and accompanied her speech with such elegance of deportment, that the ladies were convinced the good Dame Alice had not by any means over-rated her merit; they therefore entreated her to accompany them to Queenhoor Hall, and partake of the morning refreshment. She made some difficulty respecting her dress; but the ladies would admit of no excuse, and pressed her with so much importunity, that she was necessitated to comply with their request.

The Lady Matilda and her lovely cousin varied the conversation, on purpose to give their fair visitor an opportunity of displaying her abilities. She answered the serious subjects proposed by the baron's daughter on the one hand, and as readily replied to the lively railleries of her more volatile cousin on the other; but at intervals a gloominess overspread her countenance, and, notwithstanding the efforts she made to conceal it, manifested a mind depressed with sorrow: yet the excellency of her understanding, improved by a finished education, displayed itself upon every occasion that called for its exertion.

After the little party had participated in the morning repast, the sports of the preceding day became the subject of their discourse; and the Lady Eleanor, addressing herself to the lovely stranger, inquired if she had been present at them. The young lady

replied in the negative; adding, "A long succession of misfortunes has alienated my mind from the scenes of tumultuous joy, and solitude is best suited to a broken spirit. I became a voluntary housekeeper; my services were thankfully accepted, and the whole family were spectators of the pastimes. I am indeed informed that several unexpected incidents took place, and prolonged the pleasures of the day."

"Your information is perfectly correct," returned the lady Eleanor. "We had a savage from Fairy-land, an unknown chevalier to overthrow him, and a jousting well performed in honour of the ladies."

"I also heard," said the stranger, "that the Lady Matilda was proclaimed Sovereign of the May, and inaugurated with a golden chaplet, embellished with jewels."

"Such was in truth the fact," returned Eleanor; "and as you were not upon the green at the presentation of this splendid ornament, you shall see it here."

"I beseech you, my cousin," said Matilda, blushing, and gently retaining her by the skirt of the supertunic; "I beseech you sit down, and let us change the subject; such fooleries do not bear the repetition."

"Say no more about it," answered Eleanor, withdrawing her garment; "the lady shall positively see the chaplet, and I am confident she will agree with me—that it is very pretty foolery." So saying, she quitted the room, and returned in a few minutes, holding the jewel in her hand. "Do you not think, my dear lady," said she, addressing herself to the guest, "that this costly garland indicates the munificence, at the same time that it proves the gallantry, of the chevalier who presented it to my cousin?"

The moment the fair stranger set her eyes on the chaplet, the blood forsook her cheeks, and she was much agitated; but when Lady Eleanor presented it to her, she drew back with horror, and pushing it aside with her hand, exclaimed in great agony of mind, "Oh, blessed Lady! Mother of God, protect me! The man who possessed that chaplet is a murderer—is Darcy's murderer." So saying, she closed her eyes, and falling back upon her seat, she fainted.

The Lady Matilda and her cousin were much alarmed by the effect the sight of the chaplet had produced on their fair visitor; and their uneasiness, as well as their astonishment, was considerably augmented by the dreadful import of her exclamation: they hastened to her assistance, but life appeared to be totally suspended; they summoned the female attendants, and ordered the house physician to be called; no remedies usually applied upon such occasions were omitted, and the stranger was recovering from her swoon when the physician entered the room. He found the young ladies much terrified; but after he had examined the pulse of the patient, he relieved them from their anxiety, by assuring them she was not in the least danger: finding her, however, extremely languid, which he thought might arise from the depression of her spirits, he ordered her to be put into a warm bed, and kept as quiet as possible for a few hours. Every thing was performed in perfect consonance with his direction; and Matilda, attended by her charming cousin, sat by the bed-side, and watched the convalescence of the sorrowful fair one. Observing she was fallen into a sweet sleep, which was likely to prove exceedingly beneficial, they withdrew themselves as quietly as possible to the next chamber, in order that she might not be disturbed; when Matilda, whose heart was full, burst into tears, saying, "This glittering bauble, for the chaplet was deposited upon a table there, "is certainly the

fabrication of some evil-minded artificer, made under the influence of malignant planets, and contrived to diffuse a succession of troubles and vexations to its unfortunate possessor. So bless me, sweet Lady Virgin, as I wish I had never seen it!"

"No doubt," answered her cousin, "there are some wonderful circumstances involved in the history of this jewel; but do not, therefore, make yourself uneasy: whatever a future discovery may produce, you cannot possibly be thereby affected; and perhaps the whole of this misadventure arises from a mistake, —two chaplets may be made so nearly alike as to deceive the eye, and especially upon so slight a glance; for the lady had no opportunity of examining the ornament, nor did she even take it into her hands."

To this the baron's fair daughter replied, "Perhaps it may be so;" and, heaving a deep sigh, she added, "I hope it will prove so; but, at all events, I feel myself interested in favour of this unfortunate stranger—her youth—her beauty—her good sense and polished deportment, are irresistible advocates in her behalf. She speaks of murder, and, if I mistake not, mentioned the name of Darcy; surely her troubles are no common ones. If you, my dear cousin, will wait here to assure her of our protection when she awakes, I will return to the lodge; her family and connexions appear to be known to the ranger's wife, and I cannot sit down, with the least satisfaction to myself, until I am acquainted with them." The Lady Eleanor, equally desirous of knowing somewhat relative to the history of their visitor, approved the design of her cousin, and promised, on her part, not to be neglectful. The Lady Matilda had reached the hall, when a loud ringing at the gate called her attention thitherward, and the arrival of Lord Edward Boteler, her father, prevented the intended excursion.

CHAPTER IV.

In which the Story runs retrograde—The History of an old Witch, and an important Adventure at her solitary Cell—A Wrestling Match, and a Ghost.

The reader, I doubt not, will readily recollect, that a character was introduced in the May-games, called the Maid Merian, who officiated as the bride of Robin Hood. This damsel was none other than the daughter of Sim Glover, a leathern jerkie-maker at Tewin; her name was Margery, and she was esteemed, and not unjustly, the handsomest lass on the green; and on this account she possessed no small portion of vanity.

Now it so happened that Gregory, the baron's jester, and Ralph, the tasker, were both of them desperately in love with this same Margery. She indeed seemed rather inclined to favour Gregory, on account of his loquacity and learning, in which points his rival Ralph, who was a man of few words, had no chance with him; but, on the other hand, Ralph had a very powerful advocate in Dame Gillian, the fair damsel's mother, who was his staunch friend. There was also another circumstance in his favour, Dame Tabitha, his honoured parent, who was a widow, and Dame Gillian, were on the most intimate footing, being rarely apart whenever the least leisure afforded them an opportunity of gossiping with each other, and Tabitha was

also exceedingly desirous that the union should take place. With respect to Sim Glover, he had no objection, for indeed whatever Dame Gillian thought proper to propose, he rarely contradicted, and thus Ralph seemed to stand on a fair footing. The day after the celebration of the May-games, Sim Glover and his wife were obliged to go to Hemel Hempstead, respecting a legacy that was due to them, and as Tabitha had officiated as a witness to the cedict, her presence was also thought to be necessary, and accordingly she agreed to go with them. Margery, not caring to sleep alone in the absence of her father and mother, solicited the company of her cousin Rose, daughter to Pierce, the potter, and her desire was cheerfully complied with.

Early in the morning the three good folks had left Tewin, and as soon as they were fairly out of sight, our quondam maid Marian resolved on a frolic she had so long wished for an opportunity to put in practice, and which at this time fairly offered itself to her, that is, she determined to visit a weird woman, who resided upon Datchworth Green, at the distance of four miles, or somewhat more, in order to learn of a certainty which of her two lovers was destined to be her husband, and what good fortune awaited her in future; other motives also at this time impelled her to the execution of her scheme. She communicated her design to her cousin Rose, who was easily prevailed on to accompany her thither. This important undertaking being thus resolved on, as soon as they had finished their breakfast they secured the windows, and, having locked the cottage door, proceeded towards Datchworth, but not being perfectly acquainted with the nearest way, Margery applied to Thomas, the reeve's son, who met them accidentally in the back lane, for a proper direction. Upon her mentioning the weird woman, Thomas smiled, and said, "My pretty lasses, you are going, I suppose, to have your fortunes told. May holy Saint Dunstan absolve the foul fiend, and send you all the good luck your hearts can desire!"

"I thank you, good Master Thomas," said Margery, casting her eyes upon the ground; "but in sooth your bolt has fallen wide of the mark. Our fortunes told, say you! No, no, we have other corn to grind, I trow, for we be going to find out who stole our overgilt spoon, which we lost yesterday, and father thinks that Tib, the old blind pedlar's leman, took it while we were chaffering for some bobbins."

This said, Thomas, without any further hesitation, pointed out the way to them. "It is not indeed," said he, "the best path." So he wished them a pleasant walk, and, bidding them good morning, went about his business. They strolled on without the least molestation, talking over the wonderful events that had taken place on May-day, and Rose declared, that she was determined to inquire of the witch concerning the strange knight, and the country whence he came. It was near noon by the time they reached the old hag's hut, which stood by the side of a coppice, in a narrow, dirty lane, that bore no marks of having been a thoroughfare for centuries back, the cot itself seemed to be of great antiquity, half its covering was carried away by the devastations of the weather, and the deficiency of the mud-daubing upon the walls admitted the wind from every quarter. In short, the outside of this deplorable habitation was so squalid and ruinous, that our two adventurers hesitated a while, and neither the one nor the other dared to knock at the door, fearing that some evil goblin, instead of a woman, should open it for their reception. I shall

therefore give them time to become more courageous, and, before they are permitted to enter the unallowed call, take the liberty of presenting to my readers a succinct history of the sibyl herself.

She was the daughter of a gentleman of fortune, who resided at Waltham Holy Cross. Nature had been exceedingly unkind to her, for she was very ill-featured, and deformed from her birth. Her father, however, having no other child, was extremely fond of her; he remarked, that a peculiar sharpness pervaded her answers as soon as she could articulate them, and taking this propensity to be waspish for a symptom of extraordinary abilities, he superintended her education himself, for he was a man of letters, and endeavoured, by the cultivation of her understanding, to counterbalance the defects of her person. He had, however, mistaken pertness for wit, and cunning for genius. He was himself an infidel respecting religion, and his lessons were merely physical lectures, calculated to amuse the head, but not to amend the heart. The redundancy of idle ceremonies, which abounded at that time in the national church, were the constant objects of his contempt; the pride and hypocrisy of the churchmen, with the abuses practised by the monks, the friars, the nuns, and other religious votaries, afforded too much latitude for his satirical censures. He derided, and justly, the authority assumed by the pope, with his army of legates and cardinals, nor did the indulgences and pardons, wickedly exposed to sale, escape his ridicule, and thus far he was not to be blamed. Unfortunately, however, he did not stop here, but, through the abuses of religion, he made a desperate stab at religion herself, and because too many, who called themselves Christians, deplored themselves altogether unworthy of their profession, he unreasonably condemned the system of Christianity on account of their misconduct, not aware, that, while he attempted to disfigure the precepts of piety and holiness, inculcated by the gospel of Christ, he destroyed the soundest and most efficacious lessons of moral virtue. Young minds are apt enough to imbibe the poisonous disseminations of infidelity; no wonder, therefore, that the daughter followed implicitly the dictates of her father, and readily learned to ridicule every sacred institution. Indeed, this hapless female had no fair chance for the exercise of her own judgment under so partial a tutor. On the contrary, her mind, the moment it was capable of discernment, was warped from the principles of rectitude, and deeply impressed by those of a contrary nature, so that it would have been as easy a task to have reduced her distorted body to an elegant form, as to have restored her mind to the simplicity and meekness which true religion requires. When she had reached the age of twenty, a dissolute young fellow, named John Sad, who had spent his patrimony in riot and debauchery, and was fearful of being immured in a prison by his creditors, cast his eyes upon her, and determined to make a desperate effort to recruit his fortune, by uniting himself to an object which inspired him with horror. Accordingly he found an opportunity of opening his mind to her; and being a handsome, well-formed man, not more than four years older than herself, he found no difficulty in prevailing upon her to receive his addresses. Their meetings were at length made known to her father, who was exceedingly angry upon the occasion, and commanded her sternly, as she valued his blessing, to see Master Sad no more. But as obedience to her parent was no part of her acquirements, and his blessing of less value than a rubbish,

her estimation, she set his threats at defiance, and, listening to the solicitations of her lover, married him privately. She then thought it necessary to acquaint her father with what she had done; and he, with great philosophic apathy, turned her out of his doors, and sent her clothes after her to her husband's apartment. She had a small portion independent of her father, which she made over to her husband, and this was shortly dissipated. She then felt, for the first time, the miseries of poverty, cursed herself for her folly, and her father for his inhumanity. Her husband also, disappointed in his expectations, and haunted by his creditors, became peevish, and treated her with contempt. The haughtiness of her disposition would not permit her to endure such ill usage; they proceeded to high words, and from words to blows; the poor dame was worsted in the encounter, and so bruised by the beating she had received, that she was obliged to take to her bed, and two days elapsed before she was able to crawl down stairs. In about six or eight days afterwards her husband returned home: he came back in a better humour than he went away, and, by affecting to be sorry for what had passed, he regained her confidence; but in the night he purloined what few jewels she had remaining, which he sold to support his extravagances. Soon after this event her father died, leaving the bulk of his fortune to some distant relations, and to his daughter a small pittance for her life, to be paid her monthly, but barely sufficient to prevent her from absolutely starving. This being made known to Master Sad, he watched an opportunity, and one day, while she was going to Waltham market, he hired two or three assistants, and packing up all the furniture that was in the house, her clothes and personal ornaments, with every thing that would bring any money, he took them away, leaving her in arrears for rent, without a rag to put on, or bed to lie upon. He disposed of his baggage to a broker at Enfield for less than half its value; and, having paid his assistants, proceeded to London, where he entered into the army, then on the march towards France, and fell in the famous battle of Agincourt: a death too good for such a worthless miscreant! His wife, on her return home, found the house stripped of every thing that was valuable, and herself suddenly reduced to extreme indigence. She stamped, she screamed, and rent her hair in a paroxysm of raging madness; her father's memory she loaded with maledictions, blasphemed Heaven, and called for destruction on her husband. When the fit was in some degree subsided, she threw herself upon the floor, and lay deplored her misfortune till midnight. As soon as she heard the ringing of the bell at Cheshunt Priory, she started up, unable to endure the torment of her own reflections any longer, and, impelled by her frenzy, ran down into the meadows, uttering execrations all the while, and plunged herself headlong into the River Lea. It happened, fortunately for her, that the water being high, two of the millers from the town mill were upon the banks drawing up the flood-gates; they saw what was done, and, hastening to her relief, arrived time enough to save her life, for which she was not grateful enough to thank them. This they attributed to her affright, and, with great humanity, took her into the mill-house, where they laid a faggot upon the fire; and, having warmed a pot of stout ale, grated a little nutmeg into it, and made her drink plentifully, which cheered her spirits. The event was soon bruited among the neighbours, and her miseries excited their compassion; a small subscrip-

tion was set on foot for her present relief, her rent was discharged, and such necessaries as could not be dispensed with were procured for her; but her temper and her principles precluded her neighbours from associating with her; she lived alone in the midst of her fellow-creatures, loved by none of them, but shunned by all. An opinion also prevailed among the lower classes of the people, that she had sold herself to the devil; and this story being propagated, the children followed her whenever she appeared abroad, treated her with various indignities, some hooting, some shouting, and others bawling out "Here comes the old witch." She was, therefore, obliged to quit Cheshunt; and having hired the miserable cottage just described on Datchworth Green, remote from every other habitation, she resided there by herself, and never went abroad, but to purchase the necessaries for subsistence. Her fame followed her thither; but the loneliness of her habitation secured her from the evil treatment she had experienced in a populous neighbourhood, and the notion which prevailed of her being a witch was by no means of disservice to her; on the contrary, she was frequently consulted by one or other of the rustics; some of them being desirous of prying into the secrets of futurity, others to discover thefts, and others again to know what days were fortunate or unfortunate for the pursuit of their business; and as none of her visitors could obtain the least information without crossing her hand with a piece of silver, she found the trade of prediction to be exceedingly beneficial, and therefore did not deny her compact with Satan; but in order to impress the minds of those who waited upon her with stronger notions of her sagacity, she procured two or three old mutilated manuscripts of a large size, and filled the margins with various characters, perfectly unintelligible, and as uncouth as any of those which the reader may find abounding in the four books of Occult Philosophy, by the celebrated necromancer, Henry Cornelius Agrippa; and as all old witches are supposed to have a great partiality for cats, (which, by the by, the learned have asserted are not real grimalkins, but familiar spirits,) Dame Sad kept several, and among them three remarkably large ones, as black as a sloe; to these she paid peculiar attention.

We left our two damsels before the entrance of the cottage, impelled by curiosity on the one hand, and restrained by fear on the other, to announce their arrival. Curiosity, however, at length prevailed; and Margery, who was the most courageous of the two, struck gently a tap or two upon the door with her knuckles, when she was answered by a voice from within, desiring them to draw up the latch, and enter the dwelling. The sound appeared to them unlike the articulation of a human being, and Margery, crossing herself, retired from the door; when the voice repeated the former direction, adding, "If you want me, young women, why do you not come in?"

"Saint Agnes speed us!" cried Rose, "the weird woman knows us already, I trow."

"And therefore," rejoined Margery, "if we should attempt to run away, she will set her spell upon us, and keep us here till midnight: we had better do as she bids us; for it will be a perilous matter to make her angry."

So saying, she led her cousin by the hand, and pulling up the latch with caution, opened the door, where they stood trembling, not daring to advance beyond it. The gloomy horrors of the oraculous

cell were fully exposed to their view, and the Pythonesse herself, who was seated upon a wooden tripod by the side of a few expiring embers, which she was turning over with her stick : her head was wrapped about with a volupure, so disguised with filth that its original colour could not possibly be discriminated, and through the torn places, which were numerous enough, her white locks stood up on end, for she had neither a veil nor a wimple to cover them : her dress was an old threadbare courtipe, patched with different kinds of cloth, and besmattered with dirt, so that it was perfectly rigid ; her flesh was the colour of smoke-dried bacon, and her ferret eyes, which looked askance, were bloated with hovering over the wood embers ; upon the tip of her nose, which was very thin and prominent, she wore a large pair of barnacles, and they made no small addition to the uncomeliness of her long lank visage. The moment the door opened she elevated her head, which was shaken by the palsy, and, surveying the damsels, cried out, "Come in, and shut the door."

They had not courage enough to obey this mandate, but each of them dropped a low curtsey to show their good breeding ; and Margery answered, "We thank you, dame, but we be very well here."

"Did not I order you to come in?" replied the Pythonesse, peevishly. "What, in the devil's name, are the wenches afraid of?" At the mention of the word devil, the young villagers looked surmestly at each other, and curtseying a second time still lower than before, they advanced a step or two.— "Come nearer, I say," rejoined the witch. "But shut the door first, or I will call a goblin from the lake of brimstone to do it for me."

As she said this she stretched out her arm, and overset by accident a potful of water upon two large black cats that were sleeping by the fireside ; the animals being terrified, and seeing strangers in the house, set up their backs, and began to spit and bounce about like furies. At last, rushing by the two damsels, they effected their escape at the door, just as Rose had laid her hand upon it to shut it. "Benedicite!" cried she, and shrieked ; and Margery, having crossed herself, began to count over her beads with great devotion, saying, "Help us, Lady Mary, and shield us from the foul fiend!"

"Out upon you!" cried the old woman. "Shut the door, I say. What, you two Jenny Howlets, are you such lozels as to take the cat for devils?" Rose then shut the door ; and she and her cousin, making their obeysance a third time, approached nearer to the table ; but they could not help noticing another sooty-coloured grimalkin couched upon the old hag's lap, which seemed equally dissatisfied with them, and lay mewing, while it stared upon them with eyes like saucers, and could hardly be pacified by the caresses of its mistress.

The old woman then, pretending to examine a large book which lay open upon the table before her, drew her finger slowly down the margin, pointing particularly to several of the strange characters therein contained ; and afterwards, taking her barnacles from her nose, she told the young women, to their great surprise, that they came from Tewin Lower Green, and that they were desirous of knowing their fortunes. She then assured them, that her familiar spirit had informed her of their coming ; and, added she, addressing herself to Margery, "You have got two lovers ; you are proud at being thought handsome ; and you are too fickle to determine in favour of either."

"I hope, forsooth, you don't say so for the

nonce," answered Margery, gravely ; "but I had forgot," continued she, taking a milled sixpence from her gipsaire, "I have not crossed your hand with a piece of silver ; there is a tester, dame."

"Thou hast some understanding, I perceive," answered the old woman. "Go to thee ; see my thy hand." Margery then wiped the palm of her left hand, and presented it to her ; she reinstated her glasses upon her nose, and after poring over it a short space, delivered the following oracular verses :—

I'll tell thee what, thou silly chit,
The fair-haired man will prove untrue ;
What will avail thee all his wit,
When he, fond fool, bids thee adieu ?

The shorter man, with hair so dark,
Is honest-hearted, bold, and free :
What though he be no silken spark,
He will for aye be true to thee.

Here she stopped short, and appeared to be much agitated. After a short silence, she stamped upon the ground, and said, "Do you not hear the croaking of a raven?"

"No, in good sooth," returned the girls, after having listened with great attention.

"It is a foul goblin, that means thee ill," said she to Margery. "Hark how it cries."

"Mary, mercy forbid," said the girl ; "but in sooth I do not hear it, in good sooth I do not."

"It bids me cease to foretell," returned the dame, "and I must obey ; for the sprite is a powerful one." Here both the young women looked fearfully about them, and the witch went on, still addressing herself to Margery : "Be not affrighted, nothing will hurt thee ;—but mark my words. Are you determined to know of a certainty who shall be your husband?"

"Yes forsooth, dame," said she, "if it be possible."

"It is possible," answered the hag ; "but have you courage—"

"Lav now, I don't know," said she.

"To meet him," quoth the dame, "at twelve o'clock—"

"Yes forsooth," said the girl.

"Ay, but at night, and in the churchyard?" continued the witch. "Your companion may go with thee."

Rose shrank back, but said nothing ; and Margery replied, "Will not the ghosts and hobgoblins come to scare us?"

"Go to, thou fool ; art thou afraid of thine own shadow?" answered the dame. "I'll answer for it nothing worse than thyself will be there."

"Then I will go," said she, "and that is determined ; but the church is a great way from our house."

"Saint Thomas's oratory is much nearer," said the dame, "and that will do equally as well ? But can you read?"

"No, in troth," said Margery, "I be not learned."

"Why, then let what I am now about to say to you," replied the witch, "be strongly impressed upon your mind :—

Around the church see that you go,
With kirle white and girdle blue,
At midnight thrice, and hempseed sow ;
Calling upon your lover true,

Thus shalt thou say—
These seeds I sow—swift let them grow,
Till he who must my husband be,
Shall follow me and mow.

This being faithfully performed, your future husband shall surely appear to you."

"But will he not hurt me?" said she.

"Hurt thee, indeed!" returned the hag. "Why, wench, thou hast ne more wit than a woodcock: No, no, he loves thee too well to hurt thee, I trow."

And then she made Margery repeat the verses until she had learned them perfectly by rote. This done, she addressed herself to Rose, who also gave her a sixpence, and half hiding her face with her wimple, came simpering forward—"And you would have your fortune told, my girl?" said the Pythoness.

Rose nodded her head by way of assent.

"Show me your hand."

She accordingly held it out, and the old woman looking upon it, said, "The line of life, I see, crosses the table line."

"Law, now, that is more than I knew," said the girl.

"I perceive," continued the dame, "you will have two husbands—"

"Oh dear," cried she, turning to Margery, and laughing.

"And if my art deceive me not," added the hag, "you will have six—eight—ten—yes, ten children."

"Mercy on me!" said she, blushing, and casting her eyes upon the floor."

"Your first husband," continued the dame, "will be a fair man, tall in person, and exceedingly good-humoured—"

Rose smiled, but said nothing.

"But I much fear, by the intersection of the line of fortune ending in the line of love, that you will play him false; my turtle. By this line it appears that his bosom friend shall put the jilt upon him, and poor noddly will certainly be horned."

"Indeed, but he shan't though," said Rose, angrily withdrawing her hand. "If you cannot tell fortunes better than that I would not give a rush for all your art."

"You need not be angry, my little dandypratt," retorted the witch, with a sneer; "what your stars have decreed must come to pass."

"And her second husband?" said Margery, smiling.

"He will be a tosspot," replied the old woman: "a choleric shrewd knave. I would advise her to look well about her, for if she offends him he will swinge her soundly."

"Let us go, Margery," said Rose, pouting; "I do not want to hear the old shrew prate any longer."

"Hush, hush, my dear Rose, answered Margery, astonished at her temerity; "besides, you have forgotten your intention of inquiring concerning the strange knight."

"I care not about him," said she; "if you chuse to ask any more questions do; for my part I shall keep my breath to cool my pottage."

"The history of the strange knight," said the old woman, "does not concern either of you; it involves a mystery not proper to be unravelled, but which time hereafter will explain. And you," added she, addressing herself to Margery, "remember the charge that I have given to you—perform the ceremonies this night, and be happy; if you fail to do so, either through perverseness or fearfulness, you will expose yourself to much difficulty, and never

afterwards have an opportunity of seeing what you most desire."

These words were uttered by the Pythoness with a peculiar energy, and made great impression upon the mind of Margery. She promised to perform her part; and having again repeated the incantations, she and her cousin quitted the squalid habitation of Dame Sed, and rejoiced in being restored to the sweet air and the sunshine.

By the time they returned to Tewi, and had taken some refreshment, it drew apace towards six o'clock; when Rose observing a number of villagers assembled on the green, was desirous of knowing what was going forward, and Margery very readily agreed to accompany her thither. On their arrival they learned that Ralph and Gregory had engaged to wrestle a fall or two, with holders, for a stoup of double ale. They had not been long there before the competitors appeared, and Ralph seeing Margery among the spectators, requested her to tie the blue ribbons round his shirt sleeves, and permit him to declare himself her champion. Gregory was equally solicitous of being honored by his mistress, and insisted upon Ralph withdrawing his claim, which he as pertinaciously refused; so that a sanguinary combat would inevitably have precluded the trial of skill, had not the company interfered, and advised them to decide the contest by lot. The contending parties, after some altercation, acceded to this proposition; and three thorns being procured from the next hedge, all of them unequal in length, they were, according to old custom, held in the hand of a person uninterested in the dispute, with only the larger ends exposed to view, and Ralph and Gregory drew each of them one. He who fortunately fixed upon the longest thorn was the conqueror, and the longest thorn was drawn by Ralph. Of course the ribbons were tied upon his sleeves by the lovely hands of fair Margery, and Ralph assumed the title of her champion. In the meantime Margery's companion, the lovely Rose, compassionately performed the same office for the disappointed jester. The wrestling then took place, and Ralph, in defiance of all the shiftings and turnings of his antagonist, threw him fairly three times, without having sustained one single fall. The victory was proclaimed by the reiterated shoutings of the clowns, who hoisted the fortunate champion upon their shoulders, and bore him away in triumph to Hob Filcher's, at the Rose and Crown. Ralph veiled his bonnet as he passed by his beloved Margery, but for Gregory, he skulked away among the crowd, crestfallen, or, as Tom Toss-pot observed, like a fox who had lost his tail.

This incident, trifling as it was in itself, could not have happened at a more propitious moment, for Margery applying the commendatory verses uttered by the weird woman in favour of the dark-haired man, to her lover Ralph, of course the charge of inconstancy was referred by her to Gregory, who began to decline in her opinion. Upon re-examination of their persons, she thought that Ralph was the best-proportioned man of the two; and though somewhat browner than his rival, his countenance was more comely, and bore much stronger marks of cheerfulness and good humour. Those ideas were greatly strengthened by the proof he had now exhibited of his powerfulness and skill in manlike exercises; so that, in proportion as the jester receded, Ralph gained ground in her good graces. It now became a matter of great importance for her to know, for a certainty, the event of this double courtship, and she conceived that her future happiness depended upon obeying the mandates of

the weird woman; for which reason she determined that nothing should be wanting on her part. She found it, however, a very difficult task to prevail upon her companion to go with her, and she had not sufficient courage to undertake the adventure alone. Rose, who was exceedingly disgusted by the predictions, or rather maledictions applied to her, abused the old dame without mercy, calling her a limb of Satan; a false, crafty, cozening quean; and maliciously added, "She is as ugly as a succubus, and only wants a hood of snakes to lead the dance of hobgoblins in a mystery play. I will have nothing to do," continued she, "with such a shrewish calat. Holy Saint Ann forefend. Why, she may send a legion of her foul imps, and harry us away in a whirlwind." Margery, on the other hand, exerted all her eloquence to quiet her cousin's apprehensions, and to excite her curiosity, and continued to solicit so long and so urgently, that she positively teased her into a compliance. Her importunities being successful, she hastily dressed herself in a white kirtle, over which she bound a girdle of Coventry blue, and reaching a wimple to Rose, she adjusted her own, and, arm in arm, they proceeded towards the oratory. The church clock at Tewin struck eleven a few minutes after they had quitted the cottage, and crossing the common at the bottom of the baron's park, went through a by-lane leading to Bramfield oratory, without seeing a soul, or meeting with the least interruption. Entering the cemetery, they proceeded to the church porch, depressed by involuntary sensations of terror, and there they seated themselves close to each other, and continued for some time silent. At length Margery, taking her companion by the hand, said, "My dear Rose, do you not think that all this is very silly?"

"By my troth," replied Rose, fearfully, "I knew not; but if I were at home again, you should not find me silly enough to return and hunt goblines here."

"I beseech you, be not scared," answered Margery; "as eare as eggs be eggs, there will not come any thing to hurt us."

"Belike you think, then," said Rose, "the false old trott has sent us upon a fool's errand."

"Speak not so loud," returned Margery, hastily. "I would as lief the fox had stolen half our pullain, as that Goody Sad's friends should overhear you."

At this time a cloud passing over the moon, cast a gloom upon the surrounding objects, and the night being remarkably still, they heard the church clock at Tewin strike twelve, the solemn hour appointed for the performance of the mystic rites. Some minutes, however, elapsed, before our heroine found herself sufficiently courageous to quit the porch, and venture alone into the cemetery; and had it not been that her cousin was witness to her timidity, she would certainly have returned without performing the magical circumambulations, or repeating the charm; but resolving not to expose herself to the future ridicule of her relation, she went forth, and taking some hemp seeds from a little pouch attached to her girdle, she cast them behind her, uttering the momentous words which she had learned from the weird woman. She passed twice round the oratory, and nothing appeared to molest her; but having performed the ceremony a third time, and repeated the invocation, she saw the resemblance of a man, with a scythe upon his shoulder, come over the stile, and he followed her. She was dreadfully affrighted, and rushing into the porch, caught her cousin in her arms, saying, "He is come! he is come!" At the same moment, the spectre, bearing the perfect re-

semblance of Ralph the tasker, saving only that his countenance was much paler, approached, and made a long stroke with his scythe at the entrance of the porch. The girls shrieked out, and Rose hid her face with her wimple. The apparition said nothing, but looked very wistfully at Margery, pointing at the same time to a ring of gold, which he held in his left hand, as the emblem of wedlock; then, bowing very obsequiously, he threw his scythe over his shoulder, and stalked away. The damsels were so much terrified by what they had seen, that they dared not to quit their seats until the crowing of the cock apprised them of the morning's approach, when Margery looked out, and seeing nothing in the form of humanity near them, encouraged her cousin to return; and they ventured to leave the porch, leaving upon each other's arms, and, trembling as they went, passed over the consecrated ground in profound silence. Having gained the by-lane, they quickened their pace, but frequently cast their eyes with great anxiety behind them, being fearful that the goblin might follow them; nor could the popular tradition, which asserts that spirits cease to be visible the moment the cock has crowed, pacify their apprehensions. When they reached their home, they fell upon their knees, counted over their rosaries with great devotion, said several paternosters and ave-marys; and, finally, recommending themselves to the protection of the blessed Virgin, they hastened to bed. When their fears had somewhat subsided, Margery addressed her cousin, saying, "My dear, dear girl, was you not dismally abashed?"

Rose burst into tears, and sobbing violently, replied in broken sentences, "Abashed, forsooth! Alas! Saint Agnes forefend I should again be so aghast. Ever and anon I wished to have died—I was scared out of my five wits. I would not for a thousand angela of red gold that the foul fiend should return, so I would not."

Her tears prevented her proceeding; and Margery, whose heart was nearly as full as her own, made answer, "I shall go wode, if you do not stint your sobbing and crying. If it was a hobgoblin, it came in the shape of Ralph, and Ralph won't harm us, I trow."

"Saint Withold quell him, and keep him from coming again; and may the murrain take the shrewd gap-toothed beldam, and her wicked witchcraft."

CHAPTER V.

A development of some important matters—The introduction of a new Character—A whimsical instance of rustic revenge.

The morning was advanced before our two adventurers found themselves inclined to close their eyes, when, overcome with fatigue and agitation of spirits, they fell asleep. Margery awoke first, and seeing that her cousin was resting very comfortably, arose and dressed herself without disturbing her. Just as she was opening the window-shutters, her gossip, Cecily, the baron's milkmaid, passed by, who, saluting Margery with a good morrow, observed that she had played the sluggard that morning, "for," added she, "the third bell, I warrant, will ring before you can straw your room with rushes."

"Is it so late?" returned Margery, with a sigh.

"in sooth I rested poorly last night, and vast ugly dreams disturbed my rest."

"Why marry then, I trow," answered Cecily, "you are not the only one in the village who could not sleep for evil sweepings; poor Ralph the tasker—"

"Benedicite! and what of him?" said Margery, hastily.

"Why," answered Cecily, "he is at death's door, I warrant you: he was sorely beset last night by the foul fiend, and hurried over hedge and ditch by hobgoblins; they say he has been beaten till his body is of as many colours as the rainbow, and so scratched and clapper-clawed, that he has not got whole skin enough upon his carcass to cover the top of a cream pot."

"The more's the pity," cried Margery, trembling. "Saint Mary save us from night spells! He was goblinsled, I trow."

"He takes on mainly, I can tell you," returned the milkmaid, "and if you be not hard-hearted you will go see him; for you knows, as all the village knows, he loves you dearly."

"Marry now," answered Margery, affecting to laugh, "you have been putting a seely jape upon me, I trow."

"How, a jape!" cried Cicily. "By'r Lady, it is a goodly jape, indeed, for a man to be scratched to death by evil sprites. It will be a shrewd ill turn of you if you laugh when you see him, I can tell you that;—but I must not tarry carping here;—and so, good bye to you." This said, she left our fair damsel to her own cogitations, and proceeded without delay towards Queenhoe Hall.

Margery was struck with astonishment, when she heard the evil consequence of her impertinent curiosity. She wished the old witch and her host of familiars had been overwhelmed in the Red Sea, or carried away upon a besom. She then blamed herself for her own temerity, and sincerely lamented the part she had taken towards the tormenting of her future husband; for she now fully believed that it was Ralph himself, in his proper person, who had appeared to her, impelled to do so by the powerfulness of the wicked invocations she had been taught to use. She determined however, to visit him instantly; and without awaking her cousin, put on her wimple, and went to the habitation of her lover. When she entered, she found the poor tasker alone, wrapped up in a houpland, seated in an elbow chair; his back was supported by a bolster, and his head closely bound about with a large kerchief over a white volupure. The sight moved her compassion! she came to him with much less ceremony than she had been accustomed to use, and very tenderly asked him how he found himself. His eyes glistened at the sight of Margery, and the earnestness of her inquiries made him think that he was not altogether indifferent to her. He answered her with a faint voice, saying, "he had been a grievous sufferer, but because it had been for her sake—"

"For my sake, Ralph!" cried she, affecting an air of surprise. "Why, I hope you do not impute the smallest part of your sufferings to me?"

To this he replied, "I came to see thee, forsooth."

"To see me!" retorted the damsel, "Heaven bless thy wits! Why, man, I fear me thou art wode."

"Indeed, Mistress Margery," answered Ralph, "I shall be stark wode if you be cruel; but I did see you last night, as sure as I see you now."

"And where, good Ralph?" said she, hastily.

"In the porch," quoth he, "of Bramfield oratory."

"You have been dreaming, I trow," answered Margery, "for what should have brought you to Bramfield oratory?"

"The devil, or his dam, for aught I know," said he. "You say I was dreaming; but odds fish, it was a right earnest dream. Why you must know that last night, just before it sounded twelve upon the bell at Tewin church, I was seized as it were with a thousand cramps at once, which made me roar like a tiger; I was then taken up, as I thought, upon a cow's staff, and whisked down stairs in the twinkling of an eye; the door opened of its own accord, and I was hurried over the quicksets at the bottom of the common. I was then bounded above the trees in Park-lane, and afterwards soused into the horsepond in old Wicke's cewyard, where I was drenched like an howlet upon a duck's back. I was then drawn through the orchard hedge, and whirled against the holly bush on this side Bramfield church-yard, where, being tumbled over the style, a scythe was put, I know not how, into my hands, and I was constrained to come to the porch, where I saw two young women seated; one of them had her face covered with her wimple, and the other, bedight in a white kertel, was, for all the world, like you. Saint Thomas help me, but two peas in a pottle could not bear a nearer resemblance to each other."

"This is passing strange," cried Margery; "certainly you did not say your night-spell, or the foul fiend could not have had so much power over you. But what happened afterwards?"

"A very perilous adventure, I promise you," quoth he. "I was hurried back in the same guess way that I went, over hedge and ditch, without any mercy, so that my wits were upon end; and when I came to myself, I was lying upon the bed, full of bruises and scratches, as though I had been kicked for an hour by Wilful, the baron's unruly horse, or scarified by a clowder of wild cats."

Margery, heaving a sigh, wiped away a tear or two which started from her eyes, and looking bashfully upon the ground, returned for answer, "So help me, dear Lady Virgin, as I am sorry for your misfortunes, neighbour, and as your mother is from home, I will kill one of our chickens, and make you a mess of white broth for your dinner, and bring with me a bottle of clary to raise your spirits. Take heart, man; what, I warrant you shall not be lost for want of care."

Here Ralph, taking her hand, pressed it to his lips, and kissed it with much fervency. He then thanked her for her courteous offer, which he accepted with gratitude, and gallantly added, "The pains I endure from the scratches and bruises I have received are of small account, when compared with what I feel in my heart for the love of you."

"Fie now, Ralph!" said Margery, blushing, and carelessly folding and unfolding one corner of her wimple, "you are glossing over a leasing tale."

"I trow—" Here Ralph clapped his hand upon his left breast, by way of confirming his assertion, and the damsel went on—"If it be sooth as you say, for my sake look to yourself and get well, and let no more be said about this hobgoblin story; and then, if it liketh ye, talk to father and mother,—if they have no objections to our union, perhaps I may not."

"By the holy rood," cried Ralph, "this bell rings sweetly! Such music, dearest Margery, will make me a whole man ere long! By'r Lady," continued he, catching her in his arms, and enforcing a kiss before she was aware, "I shall be well anon!"

"I did not expect this," said she, breaking from

him, and assuming an air of pettishness; "go to, you are rude, Master Tasker."

Ralph, seeing that he had gone too far, pretended to have hurt himself by his exertions, and uttered a low groan or two in confirmation. He then proceeded to apologise for his behaviour, attributing it to the excess of his love, and promised not to offend again in like manner; concluding with a hope that she would not go from her word, and swearing if she did, that he would certainly put an end to his own existence, and that his troubled spirit should haunt her every night. "If that be all I have to fear," answered the damsel, "I trow my sleep would not be much disturbed;—but, however, I shall not give you cause of complaint unless you deserve it." So saying, she took her leave; and Ralph comforted himself with the hope of her returning again with the broth and the wine, according to her promise.

The exertion which Ralph had made, and the struggling of the damsel to free herself from his embraces, deranged the bandages from his temples, and Margery perceived that there was not the least appearance of the scratches he had so much complained of; moreover, the manner in which he pressed her to his bosom did not accord with that of a sick and languid person, but rather of a lusty young lover, in his full health and vigour. "Surely," said she as she shut the door after her, "I am gulled by this ousel; but and it prove so, I will lead him a dance in earnest, to the full as shrewd as this he pretends to have measured." Just as she was turning these thoughts in her mind, she saw Thomas, the reeve's son, coming towards the dwelling. She instantly recollecting talking to him on the morning they went to Datchworth Green, and it occurred to her that it was likely some juggling had been contrived between him and her lover. In order to discover the truth, she concealed herself from his sight behind a holly bush; and when he had entered the dwelling, she drew up close to the window, where she overheard the conversation which passed between the two friends: and hence she learned, that Thomas, having met her and her cousin as aforesaid, and finding they were going to consult the weird woman, pointed out to them purposely a round-about way; and the moment he had parted from them, ran to his friend Ralph, advising him to be beforehand with them, and, by bribing the witch, prevail upon her to deliver her oracles in his favour. Dame Sad proposed the church-porch business; and it was by her council Ralph pretended to be ill, in order to excite the compassion of his mistress, and secure her affections,—all which, excepting the mistake he had made at the conclusion of the scene, he had performed with much ingenuity. Thomas had also informed Cecily, the baron's milkmaid, in confidence, that Ralph had been goblin-led; well knowing that she would keep the secret, as such good folks usually do, by taking the earliest opportunity of telling it to her gossip Margery. And now the reader will not be surprised that the damsel readily accounted for all the wonderful transactions that had 'aken place; at the same time acquitting Mother Sad from the charge of dealing with the devil for any part of her information. It was, however, a bitter portion to Margery; for she found that she had been completely duped. "But if I be net even with this knight-errant of mine," said she, as she retired from the window, "I will permit him to set up my name as a silly lozel upon Hob Filcher's sign-post." She went home without the least delay; and not choosing to communicate the secret to her cousin, told her

she had a message of some consequence to deliver to Cuthbert, the barber, which had been forgotten, and begged of her to keep the house until she should return. She then opened a little cabinet that stood in her chamber, and took from it an angel of gold, which was all the money she had in her possession, and thrusting it into her gipsaire, she proceeded to Cuthbert's dwelling upon the Lower Green.

This man, who exercised the functions of a tonsor to the village, had in his youth been taught to read; and possessing some smatterings of learning, without sufficient judgment to digest them, was exceedingly pedantic. He was continually prating, like a parrot, concerning himself and his performances. His harangues were unconnected with common sense, and totally unintelligible to the lower classes of the people, with whom he passed for a person of wonderful abilities. To his profession as a barber he added that of a caw-leech, and his practice had, in several instances, proved successful: he was also skilled in phlebotomy, and drew teeth to admiration. In the latter part of his life, (for he was far advanced in years,) he became acquainted with a foreign pretender to astrology and physic, and had the address to get possession of some of his nostrums. Upon the strength of this acquisition he resolved to commence physician, and undertake the cure of the human body, without possessing any one of the requisites for such an engagement, or even a shadow of anatomical knowledge. He used, it is true, a variety of technical terms, and spoke of the muscles, the tendons, the ligaments, the cartilages, and the nerves, but never with propriety, generally substituting one for another, and constantly mistaking the uses of them all. He had observed, that perspiration was frequently productive of the most beneficial effects; and therefore he conceived that it might, with the utmost propriety, be applied to every species of disorder which affects mankind. In order to facilitate the execution of this chimerical enterprise, he actually expended a considerable sum of money in constructing hot baths, building of sweating rooms, and providing such things as were necessary for producing the operations, (for so he called the sweatings) which he imposed upon his patients. His mode of reasoning in defence of his practice was in this manner: All disorders proceed from the foulness of the blood; but perspiration carries off the redundant humours, and purifies the blood; and therefore perspiration is a cure for all disorders. Accordingly, if a man's finger or his toe chanced to ache, the whole person was put into a state of requisition, and sweated until the pain was withdrawn from the toe or the finger. Some laughed at the tonsor's humour; others reprobated his conduct, and swore that Diggory, the sexton, would amass a fortune if he was permitted to continue his practice; others, again, insisted upon it, that he had performed many wonderful cures. It must be in the moon, then, said the fourth party; for we know nothing concerning them upon the earth.

To this sagacious desendent of Esculapius our angry damsel had recourse. She found him at home, employed in ascertaining the true altitude of the sun, with the assistance of an astrolabe. She was exceedingly desirous of obtaining an instant hearing, and solicited the same with great importunity, but in vain; he would not return her any satisfactory answer before he had completed his calculations. This momentous matter being settled, he gravely addressed himself to his fair visitor, and inquired into the cause of her coming.

She, on her part, without any useless interlocu-

tion, opened the subject in the following manner: "You must know, Master Cuthbert, that poor Ralph, the tasker, has lost his wits. He is stark-staring mad; and, woe the while, his mother is from home, and there is not a soul that dare go near him, to take care of him; you cannot devise how much he scared me just now; he swore such obstrepelous oaths, and looked so wildly, and then he talked of hanging and drowning! Now, you see as how all the village knows that he is in love with me, poor heart, and I would not have any harm come to him for all the king's forests." Here she wiped her eyes, and sobbed, as though her heart had been full. Proceeding, in broken accents—"because the naughty folks might say that it is all along of me."

"I understand you," quoth Cuthbert very gravely.

"Well, do not cry so, my fair damsel, but go on."

"Why then?" said she, counterfeiting an air of sorrow, "the short and the long of the matter is this, I would have you take him under your care, and bleed him, and sweat him purely; I know his mother will take it in main good part, and pay you well for your trouble when she returns."

"Why, look you, my pretty lass," replied Cuthbert, clapping his arms behind him, "fair words butter no parsnips, and hawks are not lured with empty hands. I never praise myself, the world knows my merits; let any one go to John Fitz-Looma, of Woolmer Green, and ask him, or to Hagan the Lorimer of Hartford, and ask him; I snatched them both from the jaws of the grave; they were destroyed by the gout, torn to pieces by the rheumatism, shook by palsies, lamed by cramps, tormented by spasms, and breathless by asthma; in short, they were walking spittals when they sent for me; and what, trow you, did I? It is well known I do not prate in my own praise—let them speak if they will—why, by thirty-nine operations, I cured the one, who had been ill twelve years, three months, and two days; and, by forty-three operations, I learned the other to walk, who had gone upon crutches for twenty years and five months, bating three days, six hours. These are the benefits that accrue to mankind through me; but I praise not myself. Can all the learned leeches in the king's dominions produce such cures as these? No! nor in the world, I trow; and what did these men, when I made them as sound as two roaches? Why, like churlish unthanks, they cheated me of my fees, and swore that I did them no good at all. And then, what is to be said of Michael, the costermonger? I grant he died; but it was because he would not take his bitters, nor go into the fiftieth operation; had the pettish knave done so, he would have been alive now, and as merry as a grig; but what must my fool do? marry, when I had set him almost right upright, he went away from me, has recourse to Deval John, a pragmatical pretender to physic, and away he whisked in a hurry to Tewin churchyard; and then it was said that I, forsooth, killed him, by giving him the dropsy. Oh, that Michael was a false lordane! By the belt of Saint Christopher, I ween, the shrewd knave died to spite me, and so I was tricked out of all the money that was due to me for my trouble. Master Ralph may pay me in the same coin; and therefore I think it safest and best to follow the old English law—touch pot touch penny; for a bird in hand outvalues two in the bush."

"Benedicite!" cried Margery, "you take me, I trow, for a crazy Bessy; forsooth, I know better than to fish for a leech without a bait, and be not come empty-handed; Dame Everid, I doubt not, will unbutton, nor mall, if your operations do but

take the proper effect; but sure bind, sure find, they say; and I will pay you for three or four before hand." So saying, she gave the golden angel into his hand.

He cast his eyes upon the coin, and putting it into his purse, with much affected gravity he replied—"Of a truth, you are wise beyond your years, my pretty damsel, and have such winning ways with you, that one cannot refuse you any thing. I am not used to praise myself, but it is certain that I can cure where others kill—and so you say the young man is mad?"

"As a hare in March," quoth Margery.

"Why, there it is," said the barber, "you have done wisely in applying to me; for all the village gossips, if they would speak frankly, that the cures I have performed are passing wonderful; but it is a peevish set of witlings, who regard not merit: they are such silly woodcocks, that they had rather be murdered by license, than healed without it—for what are the licensed practitioners in physic but murderers? with all their annals, their gallypots, their glasses, their ventoses, and boxes of lecturaries, with whole loads of wash-draughts, dregs, and drugs, to load the stomach, impede the operations of nature, and nourish diseases—I'll none of them—I never praise myself, but shall only say, the gout, the rheumatism, and the dropsy, are my gamut. An operation of ten hours, ten times tried, would send them all to Beelzebub, their father. Consumptions I fight in their own way, and outswat the sweatings concomitant with the disease; but, if you speak of the megrim, moping, or melancholies, or of frenzies, and raging madness, I can give them their checkmate: twenty or thirty operations may do in slight affections of the mind; but, say the worst, permit me to extend them to sixty or eighty, and barring accidents, such as dying in the practice, or the like, and I will engage my life for theirs, I bring them out as fine and as fresh as an hawk from her moulting."

"I do not doubt your skill," said Margery, interrupting him; "but I beseech you, for the sake of humanity, to remember, that delays are dangerous; if the foul fiend should tempt poor Ralph to make away with himself while we are talking, I shall certainly pine myself to death."

"By the mass," answered Cuthbert, "you are in the right; but I am thinking how we shall get him hither."

"He is vastly strong," said Margery, "when the fit is on him; I pray take help enough: three or four sturdy churls must go with you; I will lend you father's cart, you have got a horse; for the love of the blessed Virgin, make no delay."

"You say well," quoth the barber; "and there are three soldiers, big men of brawn, at Hob Filcher's, I will hire them; and when we have once got our patient down, myself, with Jenkyn, the bearward, and Tom, the tailor, may manage him easily enough."

"But be sure to bind his arms," said Margery; "and, above all things, put a gag in his mouth, or he will raise the neighbourhood. When you first go in, you will find him as quiet as a mouse; he will tell you he is full of scratches and bruises, and as weak as a widgeon; but when he learns your errand, he will swear like a bellswaggerer, declare that he is as well as ever he was in his life, and, if not hastily prevented, he will lay about him like a fury."

"As for that matter," said Cuthbert, "let me alone to manage him; I'll tame him before sunset, or eschew my profession."

He then sent for the soldiers, who readily agreed

to assist him; swearing that they did not value a madman, although he might be possessed with a swarm of devils. The horse being harnessed, was led to Sim Glover's; and the cart was made ready, when the barber, with his myrmidons, mounted; and drove through the back lane to Ralph's habitation, where they all got out, and leaving the vehicle in the out-hedge, Cuthbert, to prevent suspicion, proposed to go in first to the patient, and see what could be effected by fair means; but he placed the soldiers at the side of the door, with orders to enter the moment they heard him whistle. It was by this time somewhat turned of noon, and Ralph, having sent away his friend Thomas long before, was alone, anxiously expecting the return of Margery with the broth, according to her promise: he had caused all the bandages to be replaced afresh, and was in perfect readiness to receive her, when a gentle tap at the door announced the arrival of some one. Ralph's heart began to flutter, as he cried, with a faint voice, "Come in;" the door opened, and, to Ralph's astonishment, not Margery, but Cuthbert, entered the room. The loquacious barber seated himself upon a joint-stool by the side of the tasker, saying, "Hew now, friend Ralph: I am sorry to find thee in such a plight. One, I dare say, that loves you well, has sent me to visit you."

Ralph readily comprehended that it was Margery he was speaking about; and though, at the same time, he sincerely wished the barber any where but there, thought himself obliged to carry on the farce, and especially as he conceived that his mistress had sent him for pure love's sake; and therefore he replied, in a faint tone of voice, "In sooth, neighbour Cuthbert, I ha' been but ill at ease."

"Yes, yes, I see that," said the barber, shaking his head.

"But I be better now," continued Ralph.

"Better!" cried Cuthbert, "why then do I see you bound up in this manner, like a corpse in a winding-sheet?"

"O," said Ralph, "I be full of bruises and scratches."

"Off then with these bandages, in the name of Saint Luke," quoth the barber; "I have a salve that will quell the pain in a second, and heal them in a couple of hours; away with them, my friend, away with them."

"By no means," cried the tasker, resisting the efforts of the barber, who had begun to remove them; "the wounds are new dressed, the pain is stinted, and I be doing well."

"Do not tell me of doing well," returned the barber, catching hold of his arm: "fie, what a pulse is here! and yet you tell me you are doing well! By the holy cross of Bronholme, you was never doing worse in all your life!"

"Cog' bones," exclaimed the tasker, "you will persuade me I am mad."

Here Cuthbert groaned, and shook his head.

"I tell you," continued Ralph, "I feel no pain, nor the least uneasiness, but what you give me by this disturbance. I want to sleep; I have had no rest all night, and I prithee leave me, for I find myself main sleepy."

"Leave you, indeed!" cried the barber, "Heaven forefend! To suffer you to sleep in this plight were to give you over to Diggory, the sexton, and make worms-meat of you. Your blood, honest Ralph, is in a perilous ferment, and the morbid humours ascend to the brain as thick as mots in a sunbeam. Come, you must lose a little blood," continued he, gravely; "I never boast of my own merit, but I am

the man shall set you to rights; after bleeding, we will put you into an operation, and then you will be as comfortable as if you were in paradise!" So saying, he took from his pouch two long 'fillets, and his bleeding instruments, which he laid upon a table that stood before him, and inquired for a basin.

The tasker's patience was now quite exhausted; he expected Margery 'every minute, and wisely fore-saw, that if he could not get rid of this troublesome visitor before her arrival, his dissimulation, of necessity, would be discovered; he therefore determined to change his tone, and rising up suddenly, overturned the table on which the barber had deposited his bleeding apparatus, clenched his fist, and exclaimed, "By the holy rood, I will be left alone! Away with your knickerbockers and your nonsense; when I want you, I will send for you."

"Ah, poor man," replied the barber, shrugging up his shoulders, "I see how it is with you."

"By the mass, I am glad on't," returned Ralph; "and if you do not get out of the house, I beseech you take a fool's advice, and do not oblige me to behave unmercifully."

"As fer that matter, Master Ralph," said the barber, "I must abide by the consequence; I can only say I am your friend, and will not suffer you to be lost for the want of proper remedies. Come, come, stint these passions, choler increases your ailment; sit down quietly—I will not take much blood from you, nor hurt you so much as the pricking of a needle."

"Art thou possessed?" cried Ralph; "by the blood of Saint Thomas, I think the king fiend Satan himself is in thee! By the mass, Cuthbert, thou art stark wode!"

"In your eyes, I doubt not," returned the barber, shaking his head.

"And will you not go?" continued the tasker, angrily.

"Certainly not, my friend, without performing my duty," replied Cuthbert, coolly; and at the same time taking up the lancets and fillets from the floor, he replaced the table, and deposited them upon it a second time.

"Once more," said Ralph, "I desire you to quit the house."

"And once more, my fine fellow," answered the barber, "I must tell you that I will not leave you."

"Why, then, you are an obstinate old fool," quoth Ralph; "and may the arch fiend quell me if I do not turn you out of the house, neck and heels together." So saying, he seized the barber by the collar of his tunic, to put his threats in execution, when he, retreating towards the door, whistled aloud. The soldiers immediately rushed in to his assistance, and the poor tasker was presently overpowered. However, he did not submit without violent resistance, and struggled more like a Hercules than an invalid; they pinioned his arms, and tied his legs, regardless of the bitter execrations he uttered, and the vows he made of vengeance; but when he began to bawl aloud for assistance, they thrust a gag into his mouth, and having laid him at full length in the cart, they covered him over with the bed-rug; they then shut the cottage door, and conveyed him quietly to Cuthbert's habitation. The little vixen who had occasioned all this mischief took her stand at her chamber window, where she watched, with much anxiety, the approach of the cart. When it passed by, she was greatly disappointed at not seeing Ralph, who, as the reader has been informed, was covered over with a rug at the bottom; she was therefore

soberful that her project had failed of success; but, as she was preparing herself to visit the barber-doctor, one of the soldiers returned with the cart, and from him she learned that the enterprise had terminated, in all respects, consonant to her most sanguine wishes. "And now," said she to herself, as she returned to her chamber, "my loving tutle will have small cause to laugh at me for my simplicity; I only lament, that the shrewd Master Thomas, his friend and adviser, is not his companion in this fool's purgatory."

CHAPTER VI.

In which Lord Boteler is introduced, and the Stranger Lady declares her Name and Family—Proves the beautiful Chaplet to be her own.

The Lady Matilda, hearing that her father was arrived, laid aside her wimple, and hastened down into the hall to receive him. He came without company, and having saluted his daughter, they passed into the refectory, where the baron took some refreshment. When the table was uncovered, he jocosely inquired why the Lady Eleanor did not make her appearance to welcome him to Tewin. "I thought," added he, "you had been inseparable companions; but I hope she is well?" "Perfectly so, my honoured lord," replied the lady; "and if she had known of your arrival, would not have suffered me to come alone; but the reason of her absence will be best explained by a recital of several extraordinary adventures that have succeeded each other in the course of a few hours." She then related to her father all the material circumstances that had taken place at the May-games; the occasion of her meeting with the fair stranger at the lodge; and the manner in which that lady had been affected at the sight of the chaplet. "And now," said she, "my dear cousin, whose tenderness is not unknown to you, my lord, is seated by the bed-side, and watching the termination of the lovely stranger's slumbers."

"Compassion well befits the nurtured mind," replied the baron, "and the hallowed works of charity add double lustre to all the other virtues; but the events which you have now related have no precedent." After musing a small space, he added, "By the faith that I profess, they exceed my comprehension; but, in truth, my dear Matilda, they alarm me also. I beseech you, my child, to make me your confidant. I give you my solemn promise, that I will never force you to a union contrary to your own inclination; I therefore hope, on your part, you will not blindly cast yourself away upon a man unworthy of you."

"I hope," said Matilda, anxiously, while the tears glistened in her eyes, "I hope, my dearest, honoured father, you do not harbour such a suspicion?"

"No," returned the baron, pressing her to his bosom, "no, my child; by the saints we hourly supplicate, I do only," continued he, holding both her hands in his, "wish you to remember, that at all times you would consider me as a friend to advise with rather than as a father to restrain."

"You are," said she, affectionately, "you are

my father, my mother, and best friend." She then pressed his hands to her lips, and bathed them with her tears.

At this moment the Lady Eleanor entered the room, and running to her uncle, who received her in his arms, she welcomed him home.

As soon as the mutual congratulations were over, Matilda inquired concerning the fair visitor.

"She is still sleeping," said the Lady Eleanor, "very composedly; and I have placed Dorothy, your ladyship's gentlewoman, as my substitute, with orders to acquaint me when she awakes."

The baron then caused his lovely daughter to repeat the greater part of the circumstances she had previously related to him. He dwelt particularly upon the sudden illness of the stranger lady, in whose cause both Matilda and her cousin had so much interested themselves, and the declaration she had made concerning the possessor of the chaplet, that he was a murderer; but the whole appeared to be an inexplicable mystery, involving, however, some matters of great importance.

The baron became very thoughtful, and an interval elapsed of perfect silence; when Dorothy, striking upon the door, informed the ladies that the fair visitor was awake, and had inquired anxiously for them, expressing her desire of returning to the lodge.

At the mention of the word return, the Lady Matilda cast her lovely eyes upon her father, without uttering a single syllable; but meeting his by a kind of intuition, entreated permission for the lady to remain with them.

The baron perfectly understood her meaning, and replied, "I think, my dear Matilda, you should use your endeavours to prevail upon your visitor to abide with you, at least until she is perfectly recovered from her indisposition; for the accommodations at the lodge, I fear, are not sufficiently extensive to make her situation there so comfortable as it ought to be."

"My dearest lord," cried Matilda, kissing his hand, "that is exactly consonant with the request I was about to make; and, with your permission, I will signify your invitation to her myself."

"By all means," replied the baron; "go both of you: and when she is able to endure the sight of a stranger, I pray you let me be introduced; for I do not know any reason," continued he, with a smile, "why you should engross a handsome lady to yourselves. In the mean time, I have some letters of consequence to write, and can dispense a while with your attendance." So saying, he ordered his writing-desk to be brought; and the ladies, followed by Dorothy, withdrew.

[The fair stranger had nearly adjusted every part of her habiliments when the ladies entered the room. She received their compliments with so much modesty and elegance of manners, that her acquaintance appeared to be still more desirable; and the excuse she made for the trouble she had occasioned, was couched in the most pathetic terms, and concluded with appropriate expressions of heartfelt gratitude. Her auditors were charmed with the graceful manner in which she delivered her sentiments, and remained silent; when she, having wiped away the tears that gushed from her eyes, the involuntary witness of a wounded mind, heaved a gentle sigh, and thus resumed her speech: "It is now full time for me to withdraw

from this happy mansion. Joy veils his head where I appear, and plainly tells me I ought not to interrupt the felicity of others." After a pause, she added, "I am indeed well aware, that the sorrows which depress my mind render me unfit for the company of all, but those who, like myself, are forlorn and wretched."

"We must not hear you say so," my dear lady, replied the baron's fair daughter, embracing her very affectionately; "nor indeed shall we be prevailed upon to part with you at an easy rate."

"By no means," added the Lady Eleanor; "for a mind overwhelmed with grief ought not to be left to itself to brood over a succession of melancholy reflections, much less ought it to be coupled with another mind suffering under equal depression: such ill-judged conjunctions are frequently productive of fatal consequences. But the truth is, both the lady my cousin, and myself, are agreed to insist (permit me to use that term) upon your remaining with us at least a few days, if it be only by way of trial; for we are determined to exert our abilities to amuse you."

The lovely visitor bowed her head, and modestly replied, "Your courtesies and condescension, my dear ladies, like the bounties of benevolent saints and angels, freely bestowed upon an unfortunate stranger, claim my grateful acknowledgments. I feel the full force of an obligation conferred in so delicate a form, which doubles its value by the elegance of its disguise. But, alas! I have learned, from woful experience, that sorrow is a contagious disease; for it not only affects the mind in which it takes up its residence, but spreads, in a degree, its baleful influence to all around it."

"But give me leave," replied the Lady Eleanor, "on the other hand, to add, that cheerfulness is the best antidote to the contagion; nay more, it will not only prevent the bystanders from infection, but will also communicate, though perhaps but slowly, its salutary effects to those who are struggling with the potent malady. This remedy requires your application. If it should prove, as we trust it will not, unsuccessful, after a fair trial, the loss will be our own, and may prove our want of skill; but I will answer for it our solicitude shall not be subjected to the least impeachment."

The pensive fair one bowed her head in token of assent, and was silent. The ladies then informed her that she was going to be introduced to Lord Boteler; and Matilda, perceiving she received this intelligence with some degree of discomposure, added, "We have made my honoured parent, who is but lately arrived, acquainted with the principal circumstances relative to the chaplet; and, my dear lady, you may be assured, that when we introduce you to him, we shall introduce you to a sincere friend, and I am certain he is impatient to see you."

The fair stranger shook her head, and casting her eyes upon the ground, replied, "I do not, my dear benevolent ladies, in the least doubt the excellency of the baron's heart; the amiable qualities of the daughter lead me to expect all that is great and noble in the father. But, alas! my spirits are dejected with my fortune, and I am unfit to move in that rank I once thought myself born to fulfil. If I might stand excused—"

"Indeed, we must not permit it to be so," said Eleanor, taking her by the hand; and at the

same moment the bell was rung in the hall, to announce that the dinner was upon the table.

The two ladies presented the fair stranger to the baron, who politely rose from his place to salute her, and himself conducted her to the principal seat, covered with a velvet cushion, bidding her welcome to Queenhoo Hall. She returned his compliment with so much sense and good breeding, that he was at once convinced his daughter had not overrated her understanding or her quality. During the repast the conversation was employed upon divers subjects of general importance; but after the table was cleared, and the servants withdrawn, the baron gave it a more particular turn, and came by degrees to the adventures of the May-day; and after mention had been made respecting the chaplet, he addressed himself to his lovely visitant, and begged to know how it should have been possible for that jewel, the sight of which had so affected her, to be in the possession of a knight, who, from his splendid appearance and numerous retinue, appeared to be a person of some considerable rank and opulence? He paused; but seeing she had cast her eyes upon the ground, and seemed not prepared to answer the question, he went on—"I do not wish, my dearest lady, to draw from you the least information relative to your family, or of the circumstances that have made you unhappy, further than shall be consistent with your own good sense and prudence to declare; but I certainly must wish, as well for your sake as for my daughter's, that some clue might yet be found to unravel at least so much of this mysterious adventure as relates to that chaplet."

"In truth, my lord," returned the young lady, sighing, "it is totally inconsistent with justice, reason, or gratitude, that I should conceal from you and these dear ladies the least circumstance relating to myself and to my misfortunes, especially since it is those very misfortunes that have procured me your notice. You see before you the only branch now existing of the Darcys of Foles-hunt, in Essex."

"How!" exclaimed the baron, greatly surprised, "are you the daughter of John Lord Darcy?"

"My lord, I am," returned the lady; "and perhaps your lordship knew my father?"

"Ay, by the holy rood," said the baron, "I knew him well. But where is, then, thy brother?"

"I have no brother," cried she, bursting into tears. "He is murdered!—his loss I deplore!—and the wretch who murdered him robbed us of that fatal garland."

Her tears put a stop to her discourse, and her auditory sat looking upon each other, and wondering what might be the event of a history which began in so strange a manner.

"Fore Heaven!" exclaimed Lord Boteler, "I am greatly surprised. The murderer of a nobleman present a chaplet to my daughter! This matter must be sifted closely. But," added he, recollecting himself, "perchance, my dear lady, here may be some mistake. Is it not possible that two such chaplets may be made by the same artist, and so nearly resembling each other as to deceive the eye, even upon a minute investigation, and especially when they are not both together, in order to be compared the one with the other?"

"Your objection, in any other case, my lord," replied the fair visitant, "would be a weighty one;

but there is a certain peculiarity attending this jewel, which will readily prove that I am not mistaken. The intersection of the rose with the fly upon the front is a device of my dear brother's; and behind the rose leaf, which protuberates at the bottom, you will find his name with mine, enamelled and embossed with gold."

"Pardon me, my dearest lady," said Eleanor, hastily, "but indeed there is no inscription upon the jewel."

The lady answered, "I do not wonder at your assertion, because you do not know that the rose leaf, which I have pointed out, may be turned back by pressing upon a small rose-bud towards the left hand, which communicates with a spring unseen, and gives it liberty."

"Where is the chaplet," said Lord Boteler.

"You shall see it instantly, my lord," returned his lovely daughter.

And while she was gone to fetch it, his lordship thus addressed himself to Lady Darcy—"But if these marks be really wanting upon the jewel, the accusation of the knight falls to the ground, unless it shall appear that the inscriptions have been removed."

"They cannot be removed," returned the lady, "without destroying the device, and that I saw was perfect."

The Lady Matilda now returned, and putting the jewel into her father's hand, he pressed the rose-bud according to the directions given him; the leaf fell back, and he saw, inscribed with letters of gold, the names of Henry and Emma Darcy. It was now evident the fair lady was not deceived. Matilda and her cousin were silent, while the baron surveyed the chaplet with great attention. "It is exceedingly rich," said he, "and elegant; but not sufficiently so, I should hope, to entice a nobleman bearing the honours of knighthood to forget his duty, become a thief, and add the crime of murder to his atrocities. Every circumstance relative to this jewel tends to excite our curiosity; for which reason I hope we may prevail upon you, Lady Darcy, to continue your history, and inform us by what manner it was taken from you."

"The loss of that chaplet," replied the fair Emma, "involves the cause of most of my misfortunes, at least of such of them as are the most aggravated and poignant; a full detail of them would exceed the bounds of your patience to hear, and though I shall endeavour to relate them as succinctly as possible, I fear the long succession of melancholy events, which of necessity must be touched upon, will be tiresome, if not disgusting."

"I beseech you," said the baron, "to have no concern upon our account, but favour us with the narrative, as circumstantially as possible. Nothing can be more interesting to a feeling mind, than the escape of beauty and innocence from sorrow and oppression." The young lady blushed, and bowed her head. The baron's fair daughter, and her cousin Eleanor, drew their stools near to the seat of Lady Darcy, who began to relate the history of her sufferings.

CHAPTER VII.

Emma's Tale, with the Sequel of Ralph's Ceremony.

"It is, my lord, no doubt well known to you, that John Lord Darcy, my father, was forbid the court, on account of some expressions uttered by him respecting the conduct of the ministers during the regency of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. He retired in disgust to his estates at Foleshant Darcy, near Maldon, in Essex. In this retirement he married Elizabeth Saint Cler, the daughter of Richard Baron of Saint Cler, of Gay Bowers—"

At the name of Saint Cler, the Lady Eleanor whispered to her cousin Matilda, and the baron thus addressed the fair speaker: "Pardon me this interruption, my dear lady, but there is at present a young nobleman at court, who is in great favour with the king, and he calls himself Saint Cler; we have the pleasure of being acquainted with him, and indeed I expect him at Tewin in the course of the week. I understood he came from Essex, and I presume he may be some relation to you."

"No, my lord," replied the Lady Emma, "that cannot be, for there is but one descendant of that ancient family existing there, and that is an unworthy cousin, and he lives in great obscurity at Gay Bowers, his paternal seat. But," said she, having paused for a moment, "I have been informed that there is a younger branch of the Saint Cleres, who have been many years settled in the northern parts of England, and probably the nobleman you mention may be thence descended."

Lord Boteler bowed his head without returning any answer, and the lady proceeded.

"My mother had five children, two sons and three daughters; one of the sons and two of the daughters died in their infancy. After nine years' seclusion from the court, the baron, my father, was called upon to pay a heavy subsidy, which had been voted by the Parliament. This exaction he was bold enough, I dare not say imprudent, to resist, and publicly, in the county court at Rumford, accused the ministry of violating the rights of the people, by laying heavy imposts upon them, which no law could justify, and which they ought not to bear. These speeches, so openly delivered, could not be passed over unnoticed; in fact, they were represented with great exaggeration to the regent, who determined to have him attainted as a traitor to his country, and brought to public trial. My father, however, had a good friend in the cabinet, who sent a trusty messenger to give him timely notice of the proceedings that were preparing against him. He left the country without delay, and had the good fortune to escape into Flanders. My mother remained behind to settle the family affairs in the best manner she was able, and having collected what ready money she could, she placed the writings of certain estates belonging to her in the hands of Eustace Saint Cler, her elder brother, and empowered him to receive her jointure. When the regent heard that my father had left the kingdom, he laid an attainder on the manors of Foleshant and Darcy; the baron was cited to appear on a certain day in the courts at Westminster, to answer the charge of high treason, and because he did not obey the summons, a sentence of outlawry was passed

against him, and the estates were declared to be forfeited to the crown. 'My mother quitted her native country with a heavy heart, and took with her my brother and myself; he was somewhat more than five years of age, and I not quite two. We passed the sea from Dover to Calais, and thence we travelled into Flanders, where we found my honoured father; he had purchased a small but convenient mansion from a particular friend and relation of his, who resided in that country. Our habitation was situated in a pleasant village, named Beaumont, near to Avesnes, which was under the protection of the Duke of Burgundy. The baron thought himself perfectly secure in this retreat, because the nobleman who presided there was at that time highly offended with the Duke of Gloucester, on account of his marriage with the Lady Jacqueline of Bavaria, notwithstanding her husband, John Duke of Brabant, was living. She had preferred, it is true, a bill of divorce against him, but the issue of the suit was not determined in her favour. The regent passed the seas with a considerable army into Flanders, in order to take possession of Hainault in right of his wife, but the Duke of Brabant, her first husband, being powerfully assisted by the Duke of Burgundy, opposed him so vigorously, that he was constrained to return from the continent, without effecting the purpose for which he came. But why do I dwell on these circumstances? they are, no doubt, much better known to you, my lord, than to me.

"My father, disgusted with the manners of mankind at large, formed little or no acquaintance with his opponent neighbours, but, flying from society, he rarely went abroad, and was as rarely visited, except by his friend and relation the Chevalier Boucmeil, with whom he was extremely intimate, and hardly a day passed without their seeing each other; neither was it of any consequence at whose house they met, the welcome was equally candid on both sides, and given without any frivolous ceremonies. The leisure that my dear parents found, from their recluse manner of life, afforded them greater opportunity of superintending the education of my brother and myself, which they did with much solicitude, calling the assistance of tutors best acquainted with such branches of knowledge as they judged most proper for us to acquire. My brother, though trained to martial exercises, was however well grounded in the polite arts, and esteemed an accomplished scholar. It was his desire to become a soldier, and his military studies were pursued with much ardour.

"At the age of eighteen, on the day appointed for esquires to tilt, he won a rich suit of mail armour, by maintaining the field on his party against all comers, at a jousting appointed by the constable of Hainault. This dawn of his prowess was hailed by my father as an omen of future glory. 'Go on, my dear child,' said he, 'in the path of honour, and acquire the ability to do your country service; and, if I mistake not, she will have great need for men of valour to support her cause.'

"My brother's inclination being perfectly consonant with this advice, he was continually soliciting his father to procure an establishment for him in the English army, serving at that time in France. Whenever a victory was obtained by our brave countrymen, in the midst of his accla-

mations of joy, he would lament that he had not been present in the action, and partaker of the glory. My dear mother exerted herself to check this military ardour, (for she was fearful of parting with him,) but in vain; and my father was actually arranging matters to procure him a command under some experienced warrior; but, before his friends had succeeded to his satisfaction, he was seized with a violent fever, which the power of medicine could not restrain, and in the course of a fortnight he died. My mother was inconsolable for his loss: and although my brother and myself used every endeavour to assuage her sorrow, our efforts were ineffectual, for, in less than six months after the decease of our dear father, we lost this excellent parent also.

"Thus my brother and I were left to ourselves, at a time of life when we most needed the assistance of good advice: both of us young and unexperienced in the ways of the world; he not having attained his twentieth year, nor I my seventeenth. Providence assisted us by the interference of my father's intimate acquaintance and friend, Chevalier John Boucmeil, who humanely took upon himself the management of our affairs, and acquitted himself with the greatest tenderness and integrity. The estate upon which we resided consisted principally of a well-built mansion, with no more land belonging to it than was necessary for the use of the family. Our means of subsistence depended on certain estates that had been made over to our uncle, the Baron of Saint Cler, previous to the confiscation of the manors of Folesham and Darcy, together with the annual income from my mother's dowry. The manies hence arising had been remitted to us with great punctuality until the preceding year, when a considerable defalcation was made, with promise to account for it in the succeeding payment, which, however, came not to hand.

"My mother, upon her death-bed, requested that her dowry might be equally divided between my brother and myself, and he faithfully promised to fulfil her desire. He not only kept his word, but extended his generosity beyond the bounds of moderation; for soon after the funeral ceremonies were performed, he put into my hands a deed, by which he made over to me the whole of my mother's property; saying, at the same time, 'My dearest Emma, whatever may happen, I can never want while I wear a sword, and England needs a soldier.' I refused to take the deed, and assured him that the portion assigned to me by my dear mother was sufficient. He would not be so answered, and I continued to decline his offer; and, at last, we agreed to refer the matter to the Chevalier John Boucmeil, our father's intimate acquaintance and friend. The good old gentleman smiled at the ardour of our contest, and said, 'My dear children, the warmth of affection which you manifest for each other does you both great credit; but the matter cannot be settled at present. You must call to mind that you are both minors, and therefore this instrument is altogether invalid without the consent of your uncle, who, I understand, is your guardian.' My brother then took the opportunity of laying before the chevalier a fair statement of our affairs. He was much surprised when he heard that our remittances had been deficient; and advised us, incontinently, to part with the house in which we resided, to sell the furniture to the best advan-

tage, and go ourselves to England and inquire the cause of this delay. 'There,' said he, 'you may settle yourselves advantageously in the bosom of your friends and relations; and you, young gentleman,' addressing himself to my brother, 'through the medium of your uncle's interest, will, no doubt, easily obtain a commission in the army, so be it you remain determined to give up a life of ease and inactivity for a career of glory.' My brother's eyes sparkled at the idea, he grasped the chevalier's hand with much earnestness, thanked him for his excellent advice, and pledged himself to follow it implicitly; and at the same time begged his assistance in the disposal of the property. 'With respect to the mansion,' said the chevalier, 'I sold it to your father merely to oblige him; and as it has lately been put into good repair, I will act on the same principle with you—that is, I will return you the full purchase money; and you, my dear children, are welcome to the use that has been made of it. Nay, I beseech you, do not interrupt me—for my brother and I were both attempting to express our gratitude. 'You know that strict intimacy was maintained between your father and myself, but perhaps you have yet to learn that, in the early part of my life, he rendered me many important services, which I have not forgotten. Since, therefore, it has pleased God to take him from us, those claims of gratitude which belonged to him become your due; and believe me, my dear children, to be your sincere friend. I am much surprised at the failure in your remittances, and perfectly agree with you that your journey to England is necessary; but at the same time, when you have settled matters there, if you should for any reason prefer being in this country to your own, my house will ever be open to your reception. Hold,' said he, again preventing us from speaking, 'I am thinking about the disposal of your furniture, and that I can get rid of it better than by public sale. A few days past Duville, my neighbour, was desirous of engaging a house like this for a friend of his, a merchant of Brussels, who is retiring from business. If he be not already provided, this house may suit him; and as the furniture is exceedingly neat and appropriate, it will answer both your purposes, if he will take it at a fair valuation. I will go to him this instant, and if possible close the bargain with a word.'

"So saying, he hurried out of the room without giving us time to express our thankfulness.

"Next morning our good friend returned. 'I give you joy, my dear children,' cried he; 'I have been successful. My neighbour is empowered to use his discretion, and has agreed to treat for the whole of the furniture as it now stands. He will be here presently with a person, who is a judge of its value, to examine it; and I have engaged a man of probity to do the same on your behalf.'

"In short, the parties met, the goods were valued perfectly to our satisfaction, and one week was allowed us to prepare for our removal. Our dear benefactor insisted on our making his house our home.

"At the appointed time we discharged all our servants, and quitted the venerable mansion, but not without some few drops that involuntarily fell from my eyes. We resided nearly a month with our friend, and when he found that he could not

detain us any longer, he consented to our departure. 'But,' said he, 'to-morrow I shall have occasion to go to Amiens, and in my way thither shall pass through Landrecy and Saint Quinten. I am desirous of prevailing on you to accompany me in this journey. It is indeed a much wider circuit than it is needful for you to make; but, at the same time, it will afford the young lady an opportunity of seeing more of the country; and to prevent fatigue, the stages shall be made as easy as possible. It will also be more safe, if not more pleasant, to travel with company, especially as the lower borders of Flanders are infested with freebooters. From Amiens, where I must leave you, the road is direct to Abbeville, and thence, through Saint Omers, to Calais; and all the way you will be under the protection of your countrymen.'"

The Lairy Emma had proceeded thus far, when suddenly a violent clamour was heard in the hall, which somewhat alarmed the ladies, and they withdrew to their apartments, and the baron rang the handbell, and being answered by one of the pages, he inquired into the cause of the disturbance.

"My lord," said the page, "it is Gammer Everid, the mother of your lordship's tasker, Ralph, with Sim Glover, and his wife, who desire to speak with your lordship immediately upon a matter of life and death."

"Indeed," said the baron, rising from his seat, "it ought to be somewhat of consequence to occasion such an outcry; prithee show her in."

The page obeyed, and the old woman, covered with blood, was ushered in between her two neighbours, to the baron's great surprise.

"Holy St. Anthony, my good dame," said he, "what mischance has happeped to you!"

"May it please your honour's grace, I am a poor lone woman," replied the good woman, sobbing, and wringing her hands; "my husband has been dead, Heaven rest his soul! five years, seven months, and three days, at the hour of vespers. Oh, he was a rare good man, ywis; and my boy Ralph, the staff of my old age, takes after him to a charm; and if your lordship will not take the poor boy's part, and cut the trammels in which he is mewed by that grey-bearded preacher, Cuthbert, the barber, he will be murdered."

"Murdered!" cried the baron; "is the barber so desperate a man?"

"He will kill him as dead as a door-nail. Oh me, oh me, what shall I do?"

"Why, good woman," said the baron, "if you talk on in this manner, how am I to know your grievance? Speak, one of you," addressing himself to Sim Glover and his wife.

Sim was about to reply, but Dame Glover placed herself before him, and thus addressed his lordship:

"May it please your nobleness, just two days ago Sim Glover, your lordship's varlet, and myself, with Goody Everid, went to Hemel Hempstead, which your grace knows is three or four leagues beyond Saint Alban's, because as how Sim, your lordship knows, and myself had some business there, and Dame Everid went along, for she had set her merk to a parchment will, and was a witness; so, and please your honour, we all went together. I and Sim rode upon Olddrop, and Dame Everid upon the hobby, which Hob Filcher bought for Madam Rut, the doctor's wife, but was returned because it is wall-eyed."

"Stop, good dame," cried the baron; "what has this to do with the barber?"

"Nothing, your honour, but I was telling the whole truth; and Allan, the parish-clerk, when I went to Master Bailey about Strawberry, your honour's cow, that was stole by crook-nosed Dick, the rat-taker, bid me to tell all that I knew."

"At this rate, we shall not have done till midnight: come, Dame Everid, cease your lamentation, and let me hear what you have to say respecting the barber and your son."

"Why, your honour," said the dame, sobbing, "when I comded home from Hemel Hempstead, which was about nine o'clock this morning, I found the things in my house at sixes and sevens; nay, the very house was turned out at the windows, as one may say, and Ralph taken from home by the knavish barber, poor lad, against his will, and carried to the Lower Green, where he has bleded, and shaved, and sweated, till he is as thin as a lath, a mere walking-string, and his face is as gaunt as a lanthorn."

"And all this done against his will?" said the baron.

"As sure as I be before your honour, Ralph told me so; and if your honour does not take him out of the vile barber's clutches, and that right soon, he will be dead anon—and then what shall I do for my boy, my poor boy Ralph?"

The baron knew not well what to make of this discourse; but, however, he thought it the best way to send for Cuthbert instantly, and hear what he had to say upon the subject. A messenger was then dispatched, requiring his instant attendance: in the meantime, the circumstances relating to Ralph's sufferings were more fully explained. The baron could hardly refrain from smiling when Cuthbert entered into the room—his face was covered with black patches, just over the parts that had been marked by the nails of Dame Everid: and when he was questioned relative to the present state of the tasker, he replied, with much gravity, that he had only performed his duty, for that Ralph was totally out of his wits, and he would prove so in the face of the whole world. "I have put him," continued he, "into a rare operation, and he is nearly restored to his reason; but, as your lordship knows, it would not become me to praise myself; yet, if I be not hindered in my proceedings, I will make him as tame as a lamb by twenty operations more. Why, my lord, when I took him first, he was in a doleful paroxysm of madness; the Prior of Tewksbury's bull was never more furious; it required the utmost exertion of three brawny knaves, besides what assistance I could give, to confine him—when in comes this good dame, who is almost as mad as her son, for she was preparing to unbind him; and, because I prevented the endangerment of all our lives, by keeping her from him, she set upon me in my own house, beat and bruised me to a jelly, and scarified my face with her nails; moreover, she beat her own head against the bed-foot, and by that means her head is covered with blood in this unseemly manner."

Dame Everid here lost all her patience, and exclaimed, "Thou art a false knave, and I will prove it to thy beard: you threw me down, you know you did, and brought in your big-boned churls to thrust me into the street, and forced me from my son, who is nearly murdered already,

and, by the blessed Lady Mary, he is as much in his wits as you are."

The baron then demanded from Cuthbert by what authority, or by whose orders, he had proceeded so far with the tasker.

Cuthbert then related the whole of what had passed between Margery and himself; and did not forget to tell him, that she had paid him for the three first operations.

Sim Glover and his wife were much astonished at this information; it was also a matter of equal surprise to Dame Everid.

The baron then thought it necessary for Ralph to be brought, and also to have Margery before him, in order to learn from her the motives for her proceedings.

When Margery was introduced before the baron, and saw the bloody appearance of Dame Everid, and the patched face of Cuthbert, she was terribly frightened; and, conceiving that some affray of a very serious consequence had taken place, she fell upon her knees, entreating forgiveness, and made an ample confession of every circumstance, from the communication with the weird-woman, to the bargain she had made with the barber-doctor.

The development of this curious transaction included so many ridiculous circumstances, that the company could not refrain from laughter; and especially when Ralph was brought forward, wrapped up in blanket, supported by two of the baron's domestics, his shaved temples appearing before the voluptr, and his countenance so lank and pale, like that of an emaciated bishop ascended from the grave. He surveyed the company with a wild and a vacant stare, which would, in some measure, have confirmed the affirmation of the barber respecting the loss of his senses, had not the treatment he had endured been made known.

The baron, finding that nothing more serious was likely to come from what had passed, commanded that Ralph should be restored to his mother; that the money Cuthbert had received for his trouble should be laid out in nourishing food to restore the poor tasker to his pristiqe vigour—admonishing the barber, by the loss he had now sustained, to be more cautious in future, and not to mistake health for disease, nor sanity for madness. With respect to Margery, he was somewhat more severe. He admonished her not to be so anxious of prying into the secrets of futurity, nor to sport with the life or constitution of another, but to mind her spinning, and endeavour to perfect herself in the duties of a good housewife. This done, he prevailed upon the different parties to take each other's hands, to disclaim all ill-will in future, and then dismissed them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lady Emma's History continued—A Tempest, and an Adventure worthy the attention of the Reader.

As soon as the uproar occasioned by the investigation of Ralph's misfortunes had subsided, the ladies returned to the room of state, and earnestly requested the Lady Emma to resume her narration, which she did in the following words:

“In our road towards Abbeville we came to a large plain, exceedingly dusty, and without any shade, so that the heat of the sun, which was still high, became very oppressive. To the right was a large wood, through which a beaten path seemed to lead in the direction we were travelling. My brother, conceiving it would fall into the main road again, was desirous to make the essay; the rather as he saw some woodmen at a distance, from which he might inquire concerning the justness of his conjecture; accordingly, he entered the recess, and I followed him. When he came up to the rustics, they informed him that the path did actually lead towards Abbeville, and that by pursuing it, we should save at least half a league of our journey. We were much rejoiced at this information, and found the cool air in the shade refreshing. We rode on several miles without the least interruption; and coming at last to a spring of clear water, I entreated my brother to stop, that I might taste some of it, for I found myself exceedingly thirsty. ‘In good time, my dear Emma,’ said he; and both of us alighting, he fastened the horses to a tree, and taking a horn that hung at the end of his baldric, without which he seldom travelled, he dipped some of the water, and presented it to me, which, at that time, seemed to possess more desirable qualities than the most precious wine. He then took his huke from his saddle-bow, and spreading it upon a bank of moss, we both sat down at the foot of a large oak, by the side of the rivulet: the birds were singing among the branches of the trees, and every part of the scene was so truly romantic, that I could not help smiling while I thus addressed my brother: ‘Methinks, my dear Henry, we are like the hero and heroine of some legendary tale, seated by the purling stream, listening to the songs of Philomel, and waiting for some great adventure.’ ‘But giants and dragons are not the champions of the present day,’ said he. ‘I know it,’ returned I; ‘yet the situation now realised to us bears more analogy to the spirit of romance than ever I thought likely for me to experience.’ This led to a longer discourse, respecting the reverse of fortune that had brought us to the spot; but our conversation was interrupted, for the day growing suddenly dark, a brisk gale of wind agitated the leaves of the trees, and, by its murmuring around, announced a change of weather. ‘Come, my dear Emma,’ said my brother, ‘let us mount our horses, and make the best of our way to Abbeville; for, if I be not deceived, we shall have rain before we complete our journey.’ He then assisted me to regain my saddle, and leaping hastily into his own, we turned the path with no small degree of alacrity; but the darkness increased, and we heard the thunder rolling at a distance. To complete our misfortunes, we now came to a place where three other paths fell into our path, and all of them seemed to be equally beaten. We had no time for consideration: the rain came on with great violence. ‘We must not stop,’ said my brother; ‘I will neither turn to the right nor the left, but take the road that lies immediately before me.’ To this I readily assented; and we rode on without making any abatement in our speed, till such time as it grew so dark that our horses could not readily find the way, and were frequently frightened by the lightning, which was exceedingly fierce and tremendous. The rain fell in torrents, so that the thickest trees afforded no shelter; besides, my brother assured me, that it was

exceedingly dangerous to stand under them during the thunder-storm. I now began to be exceedingly fatigued, which my brother perceiving, slackened his pace. ‘And indeed,’ said he, ‘I doubt that I have mistaken the path; for certainly the time that we have been riding is more than was necessary for us to have reached Abbeville.’ ‘I fear it is so,’ replied I; ‘but surely it will not be proper for us to return: without doubt, we are near the borders of the forest, and possibly may find some house to give us shelter.’ I had scarcely spoken, when we heard the sound of the vespers’ bell, belonging to some distant monastery, which greatly rejoiced us, and in a short time we came to an open road. The tempest increased, and the night was dark beyond conception, excepting only when the glare of the lightning illuminated the objects round about us, which so much terrified our horses, that we could hardly keep them in the path; and twenty times, at least, I narrowly escaped being thrown from mine. My brother, apprehensive for my safety, was continually calling upon me; and though I was frightened nearly to death, sinking with fatigue, and drenched with the rain, I answered him with all the cheerfulness that I was mistress of, and did not let him know my danger, nor how severe my sufferings were. At length, to our mutual joy, we perceived, at a small distance before us, a light, resembling that of a lamp or candle, which indicated the habitation of some human-being; we rode up to it, and had the satisfaction to find that it was placed in the window of an inn, and, apparently, by no means a small one. We knocked at the gate, and having obtained admittance, inquired if we could be accommodated there in such a manner as our uncomfortable situation required? To which the innkeeper, with a low bow, replied, ‘No where better, and please your honours, in all Picardy.’ My brother then sprang from his horse, and caught me in his arms, as I was descending from the saddle, and recommended me to the hostess and her daughter, who were come to receive me. I was ushered into a room hung with tapestry, as old, for aught I know, as the time of the Norman conqueror. The hostess, seeing that I was thoroughly wet with the rain, caused a large faggot of wood to be brought, which was liberally cast upon the hearth, and set on fire in an instant. My mantle, and the other external parts of my clothes, were taken away to be dried in an outer-room; but I retained my coat-hardy, the sort of tunic I always used when travelling in the summer. I seated myself before the fire, and in a little time the dampness was perfectly exhaled. The hostess, meanwhile, was exceedingly loquacious; first boasted much of the accommodations the inn afforded; and afterwards, giving her conversation a different turn, she seemed desirous of knowing who we were, whence we came, and whither we were going. I did not, however, judge it necessary to satisfy her curiosity any farther, than by acquainting her, that we came from Amiens, were proceeding to Abbeville, and had lost our way. ‘Blessed Mary Virgin!’ cried she, ‘to Abbeville!—You have indeed lost your way, marry, and in truth; you are at this time as far from Abbeville, within a league at least, as when you was at Amiens!’ My brother now joined us, and the hostess proceeded no further. He was followed by the host, who came to welcome us, and to inquire what kind of refreshment we should choose, adding, that his house afforded the best of every kind. My brother desired him to bring us some good wine, and to make it hot with spicery, as a preventative to cold. He then pulled off his huke,

his mantle, and his upper tunic, which was no sooner done than the hostess brought him her husband's Sunday cloak to throw over his shoulders, while his own garments were drying, so that a second faggot was added to our fire; and the host returning with the wine, pulled out a little cup from his pocket, which he filled from the flagon, and drinking a wassail to us, gave a smack with his lips, and declared it was the best in all Picardy. He then filled our cups, and placed the flagon upon the table, inquiring what he would order for supper. 'That order,' says my brother, 'must depend, my good host, upon what your larder will furnish.' 'As for that indeed,' said he, 'had you been lucky enough to have come the day before yesterday, by Saint Anthony, I could have furnished you with any thing, from an ortolan to an ox; but, not expecting such good-company to-night, I have killed no pullet; I have indeed got plenty of eggs, a couple of fine pigeons taken from the dove-house this morning, and a shoulder of red-deer hanging up in the pantry, which Blasson, his lordship's ranger, gave me yesterday.' 'Enough,' said my brother; and having consulted me, agreed that some eggs and the pigeons would be sufficient for us. That point being settled, my brother inquired how far we were from Abbeville? The host informed us, at least four leagues. 'Because,' said my brother, 'I am inclined, when the rain abates, to proceed towards that city, after having taken our supper.' 'By Saint Louis,' cried the host, 'but it shall not be with my advice! the road is very indifferent, and, besides, it is infested with freebooting-soldiers,—a murrain take them!—who rob and plunder wherever they come, aye, and do worse things besides. The lady, I am sure,' continued he, looking at me, 'will not be able to endure the fatigue, if we should leave the danger out of the bargain; but, suppose yourself there, by the truth of man, you would not find yourself better accommodated with beds, nor more convenient lodgings, than I have got at your service.' While he was speaking a tremendous clap of thunder shook the room, and we heard the rain falling in torrents from the roof of the house. These arguments were full as powerful as any that had been urged by the host to induce us to stay with him. Our assent being given, he ordered his daughter to make ready the rooms for our reception, and retired himself to provide the supper.

"Notwithstanding all the praises that our host had bestowed on his wine, we found it very indifferent; however, we made no complaint. The supper was served up; but my mind was occupied with reflections upon the strangeness of our situation,—a situation entirely new to me, and not much less so to my brother; so that I could not eat, and half of a pigeon satisfied him. We attempted to rally each other on our want of knowing the world, as we called it, but without success: the sallies of vivacity were rather forced than natural; and, for my own part, I was infinitely more inclined to weep than to be mirthful. My brother perceived that I was greatly fatigued, and therefore insisted upon my retiring to rest; accordingly, he summoned the hostess to conduct me to the chamber prepared for me, declaring that he would indulge himself upon the settle by the fire-side, that he might be ready upon the approach of morning to see that the horses were properly dressed; for his intention was to set out early in the morning. This resolution of sitting by the fire was violently opposed by the hostess, who assured him that the beds were well aired, and as good as any in the country; and this assertion was seconded

by the host, who had followed his wife into the room. The hostess then added—' If the young lady be afraid to sleep alone, my daughter shall lie in the same chamber, upon a little pallet that stands by her bed-side.' This offer my brother prevailed upon me to accept of, and yielded himself to their solicitations; being assured that no care should be wanting respecting the horses, and that he should be called as early as he required in the morning. and indeed the people spoke with such apparent sincerity, that it would have been churlish to have given the denial. Having embraced my dear brother, we parted from each other; I following the daughter, and he the father, to our chambers. Though I had not a distant thought that the host or hostess had formed any malevolent designs against us, yet I parted from Henry with the greatest reluctance; and pardon me, ladies," said she, while she heaved a deep sigh, and wiped away the tears that started from her eyes, "little did I think that I should never, never see my dearest Henry any more! But I forgot myself, and my feelings lead me to foretel the story of my misfortunes. The tempest still continued—the rain beat against the casement of my chamber—and the furious gusts of wind to which it was exposed, kept it in constant agitation. The horrors of the night added not a little to the uneasiness of my mind. The innkeeper's daughter assisted me to undress, and, in her way, was complaintant and obliging; but she was very fearful of the thunder, and was constantly calling upon Saint Agnes, repeating her ave-maries, or uttering some ejaculations from her primer. This circumstance indeed pleased me; and thence I formed a very favourable opinion of her piety. However, she had not long been in bed before she fell asleep, and I was not the least inclined to disturb her rest; I only wished to participate in her repose; but I could not sleep. I heard the midnight bell of a neighbouring convent calling its inhabitants to their devotions, and I offered up my fervent prayers to Heaven for my brother's safety. Some time after, I closed my eyes in a kind of melancholy stupor, and, half asleep half awake, a thousand dreadful imaginations crowded into my mind. My garments appeared to be besoiled with blood. I then thought that I was walking in a strange place, where a heap of dead bodies obstructed my passage. I was then labouring to ascend steep rocks and precipices without assistance, or made the spectator of pompous funerals. At last, however, my dear brother appeared to me standing by my bed-side covered with wounds, and his countenance overspread with a ghastly paleness. He reached out his hand, and laid hold of mine,—his hand was as cold as ice: he then looked wishfully at me, and, in a hollow tone of voice, said, 'Sister, remember me!' The coldness of the hand, the solemnity of the address, had such an effect upon my mind that I started upright in the bed, confused and affrighted to such a degree, that it was a long time before I could sufficiently recollect myself, or be convinced that these dreadful appearances were not the effects of reality. The thunder had subsided, but the wind and the rain were not the least abated: the lamp, by some means, was extinguished, and we were in total darkness. While I was sitting upright in the bed, I thought, during an interval of tempest, that I heard a confused rumbling in an adjacent chamber, and a faint cry of murder. 'Oh, blessed lady,' cried I, clasping my hands together, 'what horrid exclamation is that!' A sudden gust of wind at this moment shook the casement so furiously, that I expected it would have been blown in upon us. When

the turbulence of the storm became less violent, I listened with the greatest attention, but did not hear the rumbling noise within any more, nor the repetition of the fearful cry. I then endeavoured to persuade myself that the whole was merely the effect of my bewildered imagination. Close by my bed-side, the innkeeper's daughter slept soundly; not being disturbed either by my restlessness or the violent rattling of the window. I was several times tempted to awaken her; but then again I considered that it could not answer any good purpose, and for that reason I left her to her repose. All the efforts, however, that I made to tranquillise my mind were altogether ineffectual; fresh images of terror floated before my eyes whenever I attempted to close them. I fancied that my hand, which my brother had grasped, was cold as ice; and the solemn words, 'Remember me!' sounded in my ears like a warning voice from Heaven. Oh, gracious saints and angels, what a night did I pass! and what a morning followed!"

Here she paused for a while; but having wiped her eyes, which were bathed with tears, she thus resumed her discourse—

"Upon the first appearance of the dawn of day, I awoke my companion, and she assisted me to dress myself; and the moment I had done so, I entreated her to show me to my brother's room. While she was slipping on her jupon, I went to the casement; the storm, that had continued with such violence during the night, was passed over, and I saw the sun, without the intervention of a cloud, emerging from the horizon. I bowed my head in reverence to the Maker of that glorious luminary, and repeated a paternoster; then, turning to my companion, I entreated her not to delay; she yielded to my solicitations, and without having laced the bosom of her kirtel, quitted the room, and bid me follow her. 'But,' says she, 'you will disturb the young chevalier, for I dare say he is asleep.' 'Do not fear that,' said I; 'but if it should prove so, I know that he will excuse me; but where is the door?' 'Here, just before us,' said she, leading me through the return of a long gallery. 'Well, then,' said I, 'rap at it gently.' She then stopped short, and replied, 'This is the door, lady; but it is open. Saint Genevieve protect me! the chevalier sleeps with his door open.' 'Is it possible!' said I. 'Yes, indeed,' said she, drawing back; 'I beseech you, lady, go in; for I would not have him see me thus undressed for an angel of gold.' My mind instantly misgave me; the terrors of the night returned; the fatal words sounded in my ears; and I trembled while I passed by her to enter the chamber, calling out at the same time, 'Brother, my dear brother, where are you?' Judge, then—but who can judge that has not been involved in the same deplorable circumstances?—what I felt upon seeing the bedclothes disturbed, and cast upon the floor, but not so as a person would have left them rising in the usual way from his rest, and my brother not there. 'Surely,' said I, turning to the girl, who now ventured to look in, 'you have brought me to the wrong chamber.' 'Indeed, my lady,' said she, 'this is the chamber I prepared for the chevalier; and you see that some one has been in the bed.' A flood of tears prevented my returning an answer; but entering the room a little further, I saw a gisarme, stained with blood, lying upon the floor, which was also covered with blood in several places. The girl perceiving that I was greatly distressed, said in a soothing tone of voice, 'I beseech you, lady, do not cry so, and take on, the chevalier has risen sooner than usual,

and is only gone to see after the horses, or to refresh himself with the morning air.' I then, unconscious of what I was doing, seized upon her hand, and drawing her further into the chamber, pointed to the blood upon the floor, and the blood-stained gisarme; and then clasping my hands together, exclaimed, in bitterness of soul, 'My brother, my dear brother, is surely murdered!' 'Murdered!' cried the girl, and trembled while she spoke. 'Saint Denis forbid!' and then, to my astonishment, started backwards, calling out with all her strength, 'Thieves, thieves! My father is robbed! We are undone!' Her powerful vociferations soon raised the people of the house; and the first that came was the innkeeper himself, half-undressed, and rubbing his eyes. He hastily inquired what was the reason for this outcry. 'You are robbed!' said his daughter. 'Your coffer is broken open; the plate is gone; and the young chevalier is not to be found!' 'By Saint Ursula,' cried the host, 'it is true! The young chevalier, quotha; the young rogue, vagabond, knave. Oh, I am ruined, I am undone! All my money, all my plate!' I now perceived a broken cabinet at one corner of the room, and the drawers that belonged to it were thrown out upon each other; this I considered only as a concerted trick to conceal the murder of my brother, and throw the suspicion of the robbery on him. Blessed Virgin, how can I describe what I felt at this dreadful moment! words have not weight sufficient for the purpose. I thought I should have sunk into the earth, when I was addressed with all the insolence that low minds could dictate, and at the same time found myself entirely in the power of those who so cruelly insulted me. To remonstrate was in vain; and at last I assumed sufficient courage to say, 'Why do you use such unbecoming language to me, you who have murdered my brother? I beseech you, therefore, to be merciful, and kill me also.' 'We murdered your brother!' retorted the innkeeper; 'no, no, we be no murderers; we be as honest, ay, by my troth, and honester too, than many that wear surcoats of cendal, and mantles lined with minever.' Mrs. Horstope came into the chamber soon afterwards, and joined in the accusations; and her reproaches seemed more bitter, because they came from one of my own sex. In short, I became the ridicule of the menial servants, and I know not what gibes and calumnies were not cast upon me. The hostler was sent to see if the horses were in the stable; mine, it seems, was there, but not my brother's; and this circumstance they declared to be a full proof of his being guilty of the robbery. I was considered as his accomplice; their contemptuous speeches were now multiplied, embittered with such cruel tauntings as were quite outrageous to the ears of delicacy, besides the addition of many bitter oaths, that made me shudder. An officer of justice was then sent for, and the innkeeper swore by his Maker, that since one bird was flown, the other should be mewed in the cage; 'we shall then see,' quoth he, 'how finely silks and sarsenets will shine in a prison.' The mention of the word prison, added to the horrors that already possessed my mind, were too much for it to bear; I fell upon the floor, it seems, deprived of my senses, for I trust to relation only for what became of me until I recovered my senses.

"I well remember, when the return of reason gave me the power to discriminate the objects around me, I found myself in bed in a dark low room, and an elderly woman was sitting by my side, who I judged to be a votary to some religious order, by her dress, and by the large rosary that I saw depending from

her girdle. A table was placed at the foot of the bed, upon which there stood several small vessels, such as are used for the purpose of medicine; all was quite strange to me. I looked round with much surprise, and at last, addressing myself to the lady, I begged her to inform me where I was? 'You are,' said she, 'under the protection of the convent of ——. It is now twelve hours and upwards since you was brought hither.' 'And where is my brother?' said I, anxiously. Instead of answering my question, she turned towards the door, and ringing a little bell, another nun presently appeared, to whom she thus addressed herself—'Sister Agnes, the lady is now awake, and sensible; bring the cordial.' She disappeared for a moment, and returned with a small cup in her hand, which she instructed me to take. 'My dear lady, you have been dangerously ill; I am happy to see that your indisposition is taking such a favourable turn; convalescence will now much depend upon your own conduct. But you must endeavour to compose yourself; the physician who has attended upon you strictly forbids your talking. The paroxysms of a violent fever, under which you laboured, are for the present indeed in some degree subsided, but they are not yet subdued; and the least violence of exertion may occasion a relapse.' 'Alas!' answered I, grasping her hand, and pressing it to my lips, 'say but my brother lives. Oh no!—you turn away from me;—then all my fears are realised.' 'Be pacified,' said she, elevating her voice, 'you shall know all in proper time; take this composing draught. Hope for the best; and give not way to those black melancholy thoughts that pervade your imagination, and obscure the prospect of comfort presented by reason.' I blessed her for the ground she gave me to hope that my sorrows might terminate more happily than I expected. I took the medicine, which had the effect it was designed to produce; for I closed my eyes, and presently fell asleep. For a day or two my inquiries were prevented in the same manner as before; rest and quiet were said to be absolutely necessary for my recovery. But when the symptoms of my fever had left me, and it was judged fit for me to know the extent of my misfortunes, Sister Agnes came to my bedside, and entered into conversation more familiarly with me than she had hitherto done, and in a tender and delicate manner informed me, by degrees, of all that had happened."

CHAPTER IX.

Lady Emma's History continued.

"It appeared, that a delirium ensued upon my being recovered from my fainting fit, and that my constant cry was for the restoration of my murdered brother. The unfeeling people of the inn had sent for a magistrate, and were actually proceeding to examine me, notwithstanding I was deprived of my senses; but at that moment the arrival of an English nobleman at the inn prevented the continuance of those indignities to which I had been exposed. He was informed of the principal circumstances relating to my case, and compassionately interested himself in my behalf, procuring an admission for me into the convent of Black Nuns, where I now found myself, and which is at no great distance from the

inn, and in order that I might be enabled to procure proper vouchers in behalf of my character and connexions, if it should please the Father of mercies to restore me to my senses, he left a sum of money in the hands of the abbess."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the baron. "By the holy mass, but it is passing strange!"

Emma was surprised at this interruption, and paused. Matilda, who had observed that her father was greatly affected by the latter part of the fair stranger's story, and had made several involuntary ejaculations, took the opportunity of this interval to inquire if he was well.

The baron, awakened from his reverie by the questions his daughter had put to him, replied, "Yes, my child, perfectly well, but this is wonderful."

"What, my good lord?" said Matilda. But without returning her any answer, the baron inquired of Emma if she had never heard the name of that nobleman.

"Never, my lord," rejoined the lady, "though I made great inquiries. I only learned, that he belonged to the suite of the Earl of Warwick, then Regent of France, and residing at Abbeville. But may the choicest blessings of Heaven reward him for his benevolence to an unfortunate maiden! for surely some protecting saint sent him at that moment to rescue me from inevitable destruction."

"He is happy, my dear madam, in having your orisons," answered the baron. "From the moment you entered the room, I thought I had seen you." Here the fair stranger, with astonishment, cast her eyes upon the baron. "But," added he, "I could not call to my recollection when or where; the alteration of three years has not been disadvantageous to those charming features, which then appeared so captivating, even in the midst of grief."

While Lord Boteler was thus speaking, Matilda and Eleanor sat alternately looking at each other, and then at him, and the moment he concluded, Emma threw herself at his feet, pressed his hand with ecstasy to her lips, exclaiming, "Was it Lord Boteler, then, my guardian angel? Was it you that saved me from disgrace and ruin? What words shall I find to express my gratitude?"

The baron raised her from the ground, and embracing her with the affection of a father, begged she would not conceive herself to be under the least obligation to him. "I knew not," said he, "the worth of the object I believed, but did it from the simple motives of common humanity, being perfectly convinced, from your appearance and deportment, that you were suffering in a manner that you could not possibly have merited." So saying, he led her back to her seat, and she burst into tears.

The baron thought that she would find relief from their effusion, and therefore did not attempt to interrupt her, but addressed himself to his daughter, and her fair cousin, in this manner: "You seem surprised at what has happened, and, indeed, it is not strange that you should be so; yet this adventure will be easily developed, when you recollect, that about three years back I was sent for suddenly to the court, and as suddenly dispatched with letters of great importance to the Earl of Warwick at Abbeville. I was successful in my journey, and delivered my commission in less time than is usual upon such an occasion.

While the earl was preparing his answers, I obtained permission to visit Amiens, and, returning to Abbeville by a circuitous route, came to the inn where this lady had met with so uncomfortable a reception, and upon the very morning of her misfortunes. I had no intention of stopping at this place, but, just as I was passing by the gate, the girth of my horse's saddle broke, and it was with much difficulty that I escaped a fall to the ground, being dismounted without any accident. I walked to the inn, in order to wait until a new girdle could be procured, and adapted to the saddle. Upon my entry, I was, with great obsequiousness, ushered into the best room; but I saw the people running about with so much confusion, that it excited my curiosity to inquire into the cause; I therefore desired the servant, who was waiting my order, to inform his master that I would speak to him. Some minutes, however, elapsed before the innkeeper made his appearance. He apologised for having made me wait; "but I hope your honour will excuse me," added he, "for, by the holy-rod mass, I was never so abashed in my life before." "You seem, indeed," said I, "in a state of agitation. Has any thing frightened you?" "Frighted! your honour, ay, marry, am I, and ruined into the bargain! In short, I am tricked, I am robbed, and by a silken butterfly." He then informed me, that the accident happened the preceding night; that his suspicion fell upon a gentle youth, who came with a lady he called his sister, to shelter themselves there from the thunder storm; that, in the morning early, the young chevalier had disappeared, but that they had detained the lady, who was also prepared for her escape. He further informed me, that a bailiff of the district was then taking her examination; "but," added he, "she is perilous obstinate, and, instead of confessing the truth, as your honour knows she ought to do, she falls into fits, and raves like one that is stark wode." This harangue increased the anxiety I had to see her, and I was the more especially induced to do so, because he had dropped some expressions that led me to conceive that she was acquainted with the English language, and probably of that country. I therefore insisted upon his conducting me to the chamber where this examination was taking place, "for if it should prove," said I, "that she is an Englishwoman, I am her countryman, and, perhaps, I may prevail upon her to be more expolit with me than she would be with a foreigner." He acquiesced with my demand without the least hesitation, and I was ushered into a large sleeping-room, where I first saw our lovely guest. She was lying upon the bed, her head raised high upon the bolster, and supported by a coarse ruddy wench, who, I afterwards learned, was the innkeeper's daughter. The hair of the fair sufferer was dishevelled, and fell in loose ringlets upon her shoulders. She then appeared to be perfectly collected; but the starting tears, in abundance, trembled down her cheeks. So interesting a scene I never witnessed before, and prejudging the event, I said to myself, "may cancer rot the mouth that dare accuse this lovely innocent!" At the foot of the bed, the magistrate had placed himself, with a table before him; and, at the moment of my entrance, was addressing himself to her, and endeavouring to extort a confession from her. She heard him attentively; then, heaving a deep sigh,

she gently waved her head, saying, "Give me my brother; or tell that he is living, and I shall die contented!" An answer of malevolent insolence was retorted by the hostess, who supposed it necessary for her to reply in support of the credit of the house; concluding her harangue with the declaration, that its inhabitants were neither thieves nor murderers. "Look!" exclaimed the lady, agitated by the word murderers, "look upon the bloody floor! look upon the gisarme stained with blood! and, I beseech you, as you hope for mercy at the bar of your Creator, speak the truth—say that it is not my brother's blood." Then, clasping her hands in an agony of grief, she continued, "You cannot do that. He is dead! he is dead! and what will become of me?" Her discourse then became wild and incoherent: and I saw that her removal was absolutely necessary for the preservation of her life. I therefore immediately interfered; and, addressing myself to the magistrate, requested some private conversation with him; but, added I, in the first place command the room to be cleared, and let no one be permitted to approach the lady but those of her own sex. The magistrate, judging from my habit that I was a person of some authority, acquiesced. The room was vacated, and the lady, rescued from the impertinence of an unfeeling multitude that had surrounded her, closed her eyes, and seemed to seek repose. When the magistrate and I were in private, I took the liberty of delivering my sentiments to him in the following manner: "It is easily to be seen, that this unfortunate lady is not in a state to undergo a criminal examination. It is certain that her mind is much deranged; and, if I be not mistaken, she is, in a paroxysm of a high fever. In her present situation, my dear sir, I am thoroughly convinced, that a physician is a much more proper person to pay her a visit than an officer of justice; and, if one may be allowed to judge from her youth and external appearance, it is evident that she could never have been the associate of a common robber. Would such a man have left his companion behind him, whose voice might ensure his destruction? Reason militates against the idea, and you, I doubt not, will readily grant, that even the appearance of innocence should, in a case like this before us, operate very powerfully in behalf of the suffering object; but do not imagine," continued I, seeing the magistrate looked very grave, "I mean in the least to insinuate that no restriction should be laid upon her person. It is necessary, for justice sake, that she should bring forward proper vouchers respecting her family and connexions, and that the situation she now appears in should be developed, and her innocence properly established, before she is set at full liberty; but, at the same time, it is equally just, that she should be treated with tenderness and delicacy. I do beseech you, therefore, for the sake of humanity, that you would cause her to be removed from this place, where the sight of the people, and every object around her, recurs to distract her mind." "I have been thinking," replied the magistrate, who seemed to be moved by my appeal to his feelings, "how this matter can be accomplished, so as to give satisfaction to all parties, and make no infringement upon the claims of justice. I have a relation, a woman of great respectability, who is the prioress of a convent of Black Nuns, not more than a quarter of a league from this place. If she can be pre-

valled upon to receive her, and upon my recommendation I have no doubt she will, every good purpose will be answered. She will be properly attended by the physician belonging to the convent, treated with the greatest humanity, and not be conscious of confinement, until such time as she is perfectly able to answer for herself.' 'My good friend,' said I, grasping his hand, 'this is the very thing that I desire: they tell me she is my countrywoman—of course, her distresses are mine; but, I beseech you, let the matter be settled with all dispatch, for I am determined not to stir from this house before I see her removed.' He acceded to my entreaty, and set about the business with earnestness; and in less than an hour returned, with the pleasing information, that all things were prepared for the reception of the fair stranger at the convent. I then ascended the stairs, in order to communicate to her what had been done in her favour; but was informed by the innkeeper's daughter, that she was in a state of perfect insensibility, and paid not the least attention to what was passing about her. I caused a litter to be procured, and saw her carefully placed therein; and sent six of my servitors, accompanied by the pursuivant, to whom the magistrate had given proper directions, to conduct her to the convent, where she was received with every mark of respect and humanity.'

At this instant, Emma clasped her hands together, and elevating her eyes to heaven, uttered an ejaculation in silence. The baron saw her emotion, but without taking the least notice of it, thus proceeded:—"Being once more alone with the bailiff, I recalled to his mind the last words of coherency that were uttered by the lady, which, he assured me, had not escaped his notice; 'but,' added he, 'I saw not the gisarme, nor the drops of blood upon the floor.' 'But perhaps,' said I, 'this was not the room in which the accident happened.' He assured me it was; because the cabinet had been pointed out to him that stood in the corner, and which had escaped my notice. We therefore summoned the innkeeper, who seemed to come reluctantly before us, and not to be pleased with the departure of his guest. I therefore addressed myself to him upon that subject, assuring him, that what had been done was not to protect the guilty, but to give to the unfortunate young lady a fair opportunity of proving her innocence. 'Innocence, indeed!' said he, surlily; 'I am sure that I am robbed, and how can she be innocent? but the weakest, I find, must always go to the wall.' Finding that he did not properly comprehend my meaning, I placed my argument upon another ground. 'You must know,' said I, 'that nothing uttered by the young lady in the state of a delirium can be essential, either to acquit or condemn her, in a court of justice. She is now apparently in a high fever; and if she should die, every hope must die with her; if she be guilty, of your obtaining any information respecting the property you have lost. Where we have placed her for the present she will be taken proper care of; and when she is restored to her right mind, will then be able to answer every legal question you may wish to propose. She is not withdrawn from justice, but rather secured, that justice may be done. For my part, I must leave the determination of this mysterious adventure to your own provincial magistrates.' 'These be fine words,' replied the churl,

with a sneer; 'but they do not bring back my plate—no, nor replace my gold, nor mend my cabinet: yet,' continued he, recollecting himself, and lowering his tone, 'I hope your honour will not wrong a poor innkeeper; for, woe betide me, but it is a hard case!' 'It is a hard case,' answered I; 'but certainly the preservation of the life of the lady, at all events, is a matter that ought not to be indifferent to you—but this is not the reason we called for you at present,' continued I; and without giving him the least cause to suspect that we were seeking for evidence against him, requested to examine the broken cabinet. He went with us, and while he was expatiating upon the heaviness of his loss, I scrutinised every part of the room; but there was no appearance of blood upon the floor, or any such weapon as she had mentioned. I was then inclined to think that this part of her declaration was the effect of a disordered imagination, and was preparing to leave the room, when, turning over a piece of tapestry with my foot that had been laid beneath the chair in which the bailiff was sitting when I first entered the room, I perceived a dampness, evidently proceeding from that portion of the floor having been recently washed. This induced me to remove the tapestry entirely, and then the stains of blood appeared very evident, hastily smeared over; and the tapestry, without doubt, had been placed there to hide the suspicious marks, which time had not permitted to be obliterated. The innkeeper seemed to be much confused at the discovery, which I observed, and, without giving him time to study any evasion, commanded him, in a peremptory tone of voice, to produce the gisarme that had so much affected the lady. He changed colour upon hearing the weapon named; and after some hesitation, 'What did your honour say?' replied he, with a trembling accent. I repeated the demand, and sternly said I would not be trifled with. 'Your honour speaks of the gisarme—Yes, yes, it is true enough, there was a gisarme.' 'And it was stained with blood,' said I. 'By my fay, I know not that,' returned the host. 'But where is this gisarme? I do not see it here,' said I. 'Indeed, your honour,' answered he, 'I am as innocent as the child unborn: I do not know what they have done with the gisarme.' I then insisted upon his producing it immediately, declaring that I would not stir until I had seen it. Finding that no evasion could be made, he at last informed us, that it had been thrust under the bed, because the lady fell into fits at the sight of it. He then pulled it out, and was attempting to wipe it with the skirt of his tunic, saying, at the same time, 'I do not think it is bloody, your honour.' I prevented him from effecting his design, and snatching it from him, plainly perceived the marks of blood upon it. I then looked earnestly at him, and shook my head: he seemed much confused, and cast his eyes upon the ground. I then pointed to the wet floor—'And for what purpose was this recent washing?' said I; 'these, also, are drops of blood.' 'By the holy mass bell,' exclaimed the host, 'I know not of the washing! I suppose the women did it to make the room fit for the reception of his worship, the bailiff. By the blessed rood cross, I am as innocent as a new-born child; and for that axe, it is none of mine, but it lay upon the floor when I entered the room this morning.' 'Perhaps,' said I, 'it belonged to the young chevalier.' 'I do not know that; I lighted

him myself to this chamber last night, and I will make oath upon the holy Evangelists that he had no such weapon.' This circumstance induced the magistrate to think the host had no hand in the murder; 'for,' says he, 'it is possible that some villains may have entered the house in the night, murdered the young gentleman, and committed the robbery.' 'But what then is become of the body?' said I. 'The thieves from abroad, whose business it is to elude detection, by getting at a distance with all possible speed, would hardly have encumbered themselves with the breathless body of a murdered man; especially as the booty, which it seems they have taken with them, was sufficiently burthensome.' 'I own,' replied the magistrate, 'that this part of the transaction is inexplicable to me. I will, however, cause the strictest search to be made for the body of the chevalier, and keep the gisarme; time may, perhaps, point out the owner, and lead to the development of this mystery.' At this moment a courier from the Earl of Warwick, who had been sent from Amiens in search of me, and who had traced me to the inn, delivered me letters, which ordered me to return to Abbeville without delay. I was therefore obligated to depart immediately, and leave the development of the adventure to the bailiff and his assistants. I, however, recommended the lady strongly to his protection, and begged him to do justice to all parties. I then took my leave, promising to return in the course of two or three days, if circumstances permitted; being exceedingly anxious to know what the event would be of so singular an incident. In this, however, I was disappointed; for on my arrival at Abbeville, I was charged that very evening with despatches for England, and I executed my commission with such punctuality, that I reached Calais early the next morning, and thence proceeded to London, where his majesty held his court. My departure from Abbeville was urged by the regent with so much importunity, that it was some time before I recollect ed my remissness in not having engaged the bailiff to impart to me by letter the sequel of his examinations. I had not acquainted him with my name, or given him any directions, by which such information could have been conveyed to me; and for my part, I was equally ignorant how to address him. Since that time, I have had no opportunity of hearing any thing further relative to that strange event; and little did I expect, at this time, so happily to meet with the lovely object of my solicitude.'

Here the baron concluded his narrative; and a short silence evinced the effect it had upon the ladies. Eleanor was the first that resumed the conversation; and addressed herself to Emma, pressing her hand at the same time, and said, "My dear Lady Darcy, we are much interested by the history of your unparalleled sufferings, and, of course, exceedingly anxious to hear the sequel. Surely this gloomy night of adversity will terminate in a cheerful and cloudless morning."

Emma elevated her eyes, which were still bathed with tears, and shook her head, saying, "The night of adversity, my dearest lady, is by no means closed: permit me to mourn my woes in silence. Why should I make you melancholy with the needless relation of private sorrows."

"Indeed," said Matilda, "we must claim the privilege of sympathising with you; and for that

very reason, indulge us with the continuation of your adventures."

The fair Emma then heaved a sigh, and thus proceeded:—"As soon as it was known that I had recovered the use of my reason, the officer of justice mentioned by his lordship waited upon me, attended by a Franciscan friar. The former acquainted me with the grounds of the accusation preferred against me by the innkeeper, of which I had not a very perfect recollection. The latter recommended me to quiet my conscience, if I was guilty, by a full and candid confession. I informed the holy father, that I was very ready to comply with his advice; and then briefly related to them my unfortunate story, and entreated that my dear friend at Beaumont might be applied to without delay; who, I assured them, would give them perfect satisfaction respecting the truth of every thing that I had asserted concerning myself or my family. When the bailiff had heard that my parentage and connexions were so respectable, he politely assured me, that he was sorry the forms of justice required him to detain me, until an attestation could be procured from my friend at Beaumont. I begged him to make himself perfectly easy upon that subject; 'because,' said I, 'it would be highly improper for the daughter of a nobleman to fly from an attestation. It is her duty to demand it, nor to leave behind her the least shadow of ground for malevolence to fix a stain upon her character.' I then earnestly requested him to make every possible inquiry respecting my unfortunate brother. 'It would be,' said I, weeping, 'a satisfaction, though a melancholy one, to see his breathless body reposed in the sacred cemetery, with those ceremonies his rank demands; at least, with that decency which Christian piety will certainly afford.' I then learned, that unremitting inquiries had been made, and every part of the inn most carefully searched to discover the body of my dear brother. The bailiff also informed me, that the innkeeper, with the family, and all his servants, had undergone a long and particular examination respecting the gisarme stained with blood; but nothing had transpired sufficiently strong against any of them to justify a criminal prosecution: on the contrary, from their united testimony, it appeared, that the house had been robbed, and that the innkeeper had sustained a considerable loss. The owner of the gisarme could not be traced; but to him we must attribute both the robbery and the murder, leaving to the just determination of an all-wise Providence to develop, at his good pleasure, this mysterious event."

CHAPTER X.

Lady Emma's History continued.

"After an interval of three days, I was desired to attend the lady prioress in her own apartment. I was not in the least surprised at this summons; for I had been indulged the day before with an interview. I was received with great politeness. The good lady heard my melancholy narrative with great compassion; and from the tenderness of her expression, I conceived that she interested herself in my behalf. It was with pleasure, there-

fore, that I repeated the visit. On entering into her chamber, I found her alone. 'Approach, my dear Lady Darcy,' said she, with great affability. 'I have tidings for you, which, though they cannot remove the cause of your sorrows, may yet, in some measure, tend to render them less poignant:—your innocence is established beyond the reach of the most scrupulous suspicion.' 'Oh, my dearest lady,' replied I, hastily, 'the messenger is certainly returned from Beaumont.' 'He is,' replied the prioress; 'and I would advise you not to be greatly surprised, if you should soon see your good friend in person; for it is his intention to wait upon you, and console with you upon this melancholy occasion.' Perceiving that I was much agitated by her address, she changed the discourse for a few minutes; and when my mind was a little more tranquil, returning to the subject, she at last informed me, that my ever-respected benefactor was actually arrived, and waited to see me. I will not attempt to describe my feelings at our meeting. Notwithstanding the manner in which the lady prioress had prepared me for the interview, joy, grief, and a variety of other conflicting passions, took possession of my mind at the same instant; and it was only by an effusion of tears that I could obtain relief. What did the good old man not say to soothe my sorrows! How pathetic was his language of condolence! How generous his offers of protection! Had my dear father returned from the grave to my assistance, he could not have expressed his concern for me with more soul-feit affection and delicacy. 'My dear child,' said he, gently grasping my hand at parting, 'I will see you again to-morrow; in the mean time, I must request you to turn in your mind in what manner I can be serviceable to you; remembering always, that the daughter of my benefactor, Lord Darcy, is as dear to me as if I had myself been her parent.'

The next day he came according to his promise, and seemed very anxious for me to go back with him to Beaumont, and wait the return of letters from England. 'Your uncle,' said he, 'must be made acquainted with this melancholy accident; for that purpose I have written to him. He will, I doubt not, provide for you a safe conveyance, and suitable to your rank; and, until something of that sort is done, you see that it will be impossible for you to go forward on your journey, without exposing yourself to rapacity and insult.' I received this new instance of his regard for my welfare with the deepest sense of gratitude; but I excused myself from accepting his pressing invitation, 'as every object there would incessantly recall to my mind the pleasing hours of childhood, and renew, with aggravated misery, the accumulated sorrows that now distract it. These perpetual companions would be a continual torment, and my melancholy, my dearest benefactor, might even embitter that tranquillity which, it is my earnest petition to Heaven, you may ever enjoy. That well-known mansion, where my dear brother and myself danced, as it were, through the gay scene of early life, emulous to promote each other's happiness, and free from every care;—the sight of that mansion would distract me. It would recall the horrors of that dreadful night when I lost that brother;—his sufferings;—but, all-gracious Heaven! who knows how extensive those sufferings may have been? Oh, dearest brother! had you expired in the way

that nature appoints, I might have wept over you, and closed your eyes in death. This severe duty affection would have commanded me to perform. I should then have looked up to Heaven with submission, sung thy requiem, and had the doleful-satisfaction, at least, of seeing an end of all thy pain. Oh, my Redeemer!—yes, I trust in thee.'

Here Emma, elevating her lovely eyes, glistening with tears, was silent for a few moments; when, recollecting herself, she turned to the company, and renewed her speech. "Pardon, I beseech you, my lord, and dear ladies, this digressive apostrophe; my mind was bewildered, and the recollection of what passed upon that mournful occasion led me from the subject unconsciously.

"But to proceed. My friendly benefactor seemed somewhat chagrined at my refusal of his offer of protection. 'And how, my dear lady,' said he, 'will you then dispose of yourself?' 'It would surely,' returned I, 'be an instance of the highest ingratitude in me to conceal the least circumstance of my present situation from you. I was yesterday introduced to an English lady of distinction, whose family residence is at Bellericay, in Essex. This young lady's father, Sir John Tracy, dying about three years back, left his affairs in a very unsettled situation. He was possessed of several manors, but they were encumbered with high mortgages, so that Lady Tracy found herself involved in suits of the most expensive kind. She had one only daughter remaining, out of six children, at the time of the knight's decease; and, being fearful that the issue of the law might prove unfavourable, she raised a sum of money upon her own dowry, and purchased in that daughter's name a small estate, by which she might be enabled to live, if not with magnificence, at least with comfort; but, at the same time, finding that her attention to tedious processes in the courts of judicature engrossed so much of her time, that she could not properly attend to the tuition of her daughter, then turned twelve, she recollects that the lady prioress of this convent was a distant relation of Sir John Tracy, and, therefore, thought she could not do better for the young lady than to send her hither, and here she has received such instructions as are necessary for her rank. Lady Tracy has settled with all the creditors of the deceased knight, the termination of the suits having proved more favourable than had been expected. She is now come herself into Picardy, to conduct her daughter back to Bellericay. She has been acquainted with my name, which is familiar to her; for her residence is not above four leagues from Gay Bowers, the seat of my uncle. These ladies, with their suite, are to take their leave of the prioress to-morrow, and will return to England without delay, and it is my desire to embrace this opportunity of travelling with persons of my own sex; therefore, I am this day to be introduced to Lady Tracy, who, her daughter assures me, will be glad of my company. The only difficulty that remains, rests upon the determination of the officers of justice, by whose order I am detained; for I am uncertain if I be at this moment a pri-or or not.' My benefactor expressed great satisfaction at the prospect of my returning so safely, and so comfortably, to my native country. 'Prepare yourself, my dear child,' said he, without the least hesitation;

‘I will take care that nothing shall occur to detain you. I will see you in the morning, previous to your departure, and give you letters to your uncle that may be of service to you; seeing that you have unfortunately lost the documents that were in your brother’s possession.’ So saying, he took his leave.

“I was soon after introduced to Lady Tracy. She was a tall, well-made woman, about fifty years of age; her countenance was exceedingly comely, and highly expressive of good nature. She received me with great politeness, and seemed to be perfectly well acquainted with the circumstances that had occasioned my father to quit his native country. She assured me also that she had frequently been in company with my uncle, the Baron St. Clerc, who, she told me, was much reserved in his manners, and possessed a certain sternness of countenance which commanded rather than inspired respect. I felt some disquietude at this description of my uncle, but a different turn in the conversation soon effaced it from my mind.

“The next morning my kind benefactor came very early, having his servants with him, who delivered a mail, which he ordered them to lay upon a table in the middle of the room; this done, they retired. ‘My dear child,’ said he, ‘you must oblige me by accepting these few articles. It is necessary that you should have a sufficient change of dress to appear to be the daughter of my best friend, and in this mail you will find them; the letters are also enclosed.’ I knew not what to say to him upon this new manifestation of his benevolence, and was preparing to answer him, when he thus proceeded:—‘I will not hear any reply, or take any denial. I owe much more than such trifling services to the favour of your deceased parent; and it is a source of great comfort to me that it is in my power to mitigate, in the smallest degree, the sufferings of so near and so dear a relative. I must, my good Lady Darcy, beg of you to promise me one thing, and that is to deliver a small packet you will find in this mail, according to the directions inscribed upon it.’ I promised him not to fail. He then soothed my hand, pressed it to his lips, bathed it with tears, and said, ‘Adieu, my dear lady. May good angels protect you! and may He, who suffered death upon the rood for all mankind, grant that your future happiness may overbalance the afflictions you have undergone.’ And so saying, presented me with the key of the mail. My heart was so full I could not answer. He took the advantage of this moment, hastened to the door, and shut it after him; so that I saw my worthy benefactor no more. I traversed the room several times in much agitation of mind, and it was a considerable time before I had the resolution to unlock the mail; and the first thing that struck my sight was a packet with a direction on it. ‘This,’ said I to myself, ‘is certainly the packet my dear friend alluded to.’ I read the inscription, and was surprised to find it to this effect—For the young Lady Darcy, and for her use only. Upon opening it, I found a gipsire filled with angels and a gold noble. Said I to myself, ‘This profusion of benevolence exceeds the bounds of moderation. It is painful to feel the weight of such obligations, and feel the total want of power to make any return;’ and then throwing myself upon my knees, I poured out my soul in prayer to God and the blessed Virgin that they would richly reward him for his

bounty. The mail contained besides three several suits of apparel, exceedingly rich, and adorned with embroidery, a chevassal of pearls, and other jewels necessary for the decoration of a woman of quality.

“I had scarcely returned them to their place, and taken from the gipsire as much gold as I thought would be necessary for my present use, when I was told that the ladies were nearly ready to depart. On my taking leave of the prioress she held out her hand with a purse—‘This,’ said she, ‘is yours. I have taken from it as much as your board and accommodation requires; the remainder is certainly your due.’ I refused, however, to accept of it, saying, ‘Heaven sent it in a time of necessity. Keep it in your hands; and if the body of my dear brother should be found, give orders that it may be buried as becomes a Christian knight; and, in the mean time, let there be masses and dirges performed for the repose of his soul.’ Having taken our leave of the lady prioress and the holy sisterhood, and especially of Agnes and her companion, who had been so kind to me during my illness, I joined the ladies; and the weather being remarkably fine, we proceeded in an open carriage to Arres, and thence to Calais, where we took shipping for Dover, and arrived at that port without any interruption.

“I felt an labred sensation of pleasure, when I remembered that I was once more standing upon my native land; it was, however, alloyed by I know not what pressages of trouble yet to come. I endeavoured to dissipate these gloomy reflections by recommending myself to the protection of the blessed Virgin Mary; and the vespers bell calling to prayers, I entered the church, and performed those duties that piety requires, with all the fervency that I was mistress of.

“Having passed the night at Dover, we proceeded to Canterbury, where we determined to stop a day or two, in order to see what was worthy of remark in that ancient city, and particularly to offer our devotions at the holyshrine of St. Thomas. We were informed that the archbishop would himself preside at the holy mass upon the ensuing day; we therefore went early to the cathedral, and were fortunate enough to obtain a convenient situation to see the whole of the ceremony, which was conducted with much more grandeur and solemnity than I had ever seen before. I could not help reflecting at this moment upon the singularity of my present situation. Uncertain of a friendly reception from my own relations, and exposed to a thousand disappointments, my mind was much depressed, and I began to excuse myself for flying from the invitations of calm retirement which Providence had cast in my way, and plunging myself into the evils and perplexities that are the constant and dangerous attendants upon a life of secular concern. Had a proper opportunity at that moment offered I should, I doubt not, have embraced it eagerly, and, in the recess of the cloister, have avoided those accumulating evils which have overtaken me. Such were the sentiments of my mind when the holy mass was concluded; and my young companion, whose name is Rosalind, reaked me, as it were, to this world, by telling me they were now going to visit the tomb of the holy martyr. I was exceedingly surprised to find it so rich and magnificent. It absolutely was one flat of gold and jewels, some of which were of great magnitude, and inestimable respecting their value. It was surrounded with burning

papers, and a prodigious multitude of pilgrims and pious votaries encircled the steps, and precluded all possibility of near approach. I therefore, with my companions, kneeled upon the pavement at a distance, and kissed a golden coffer, which was carried in a kind of procession round the shrine, and contained a piece of the blessed martyr's skull, which was seen through a crystal fixed upon the top for that purpose. My eyes were directed to a tablet that hung over the shrine, and upon which was depicted the saint, the two officiating at the holy altar, surrounded by the cruel murderers, one of which, with his basilar, was aiming a blow at his head. I wept much at this pitiful sight. 'And perhaps,' said I to myself, with a sigh, 'perhaps surrounded by such merciless barbarians, my dear unfortunate brother died.' In this cathedral we also saw the tomb of Edward Prince of Wales, and over it displayed the shirt of mail that he wore under the cuirass in the fields of Crassey and Poitiers, where he obtained those celebrated victories that will hand down his fame, as a soldier, to the latest annals of posterity.

"From Canterbury we proceeded through Faversham and Sittingbourne to Rochester—thence to Gravesend. The evening closed upon us before we reached the latter place, so that we did not think it prudent to cross the water before morning; for your lordship well knows, without doubt, that this is a small fishing town upon the banks of the Thames, and opposite to Tilbury Fort, in Essex. We were, however, obliged to put up with very poor accommodation; but Lady Tracy and her daughter endeavoured, by their politeness and good humour, to supply these defects. My mind, however, was too much occupied upon the approaching interview with my uncle to enter into a full participation of their pleasantry. I used, indeed, every endeavour to disguise my sensations, but I fear I acquitted myself but awkwardly upon the occasion. After supper Lady Tracy said, 'It is too soon for us at present to retire to rest. I will, my dear children—but excuse,' added she, 'my dear Lady Darcy, the familiarity of my address.' I pressed her hand to my lips, and declared that I thought myself highly honoured by so distinguishing a mark of her friendship. She smiled, and proceeded—'I will, then, relate to you a little history of an adventure that happened in this town, the truth of which I vouch for upon my own knowledge.'

"The story being concluded, which in reality suspended the poignancy of my reflections, I thanked her for her courtesy, and retired to rest. I slept but little, and rose early. My dear friends were not so watchful, so that I had prepared every thing necessary for their breakfast before they descended from their chamber. My attention seemed to be particularly pleasing to them, and the compliments of the morning were interchanged with much sincerity.

"Immediately after we had taken our refreshment we crossed the Thames. A carriage was provided for us at Tilbury, and in the course of two hours reached the summit of Langdon-hill. Here I was gratified with the most delightful prospect my eyes ever beheld; and Lady Tracy caused the carriage to stop at certain intervals, that her daughter and I might be indulged with a full enjoyment of it, while she, to whom it was familiar, pointed out to us the most material objects. The country before us formed a beautiful

enclosed valley, bounded towards the west and south-west by the distant hills of Highgate and Hampstead, and the Surrey hills, within which wide circuit appeared the great emporium of Europe, the city of London; thence I could trace the beautiful meanderings of the Thames, and the quantities of shipping passing and repassing. I saw the village of Tilbury below, and Gravesend, with the chalk cliffs of Kent, and the country rising like a vast amphitheatre from the marshes. Turning towards the east, we discovered the conjunction of the Thames with the Medway, and the view was terminated by the blue tints of the salt sea, where it opens into the mouth of the British Channel; and as we passed the corner of a little grove, which shut out the northern part of the prospect, I saw a little hill, superior to any thing that was near it, and upon it a very tall spire. 'And that place,' said I to the good lady, who made me acquainted with the names of the different places that I had seen—'That distant hill with the tall spire, what is it called?' 'That,' said she, smiling, 'is near the place to which you are going—that is Danbury.' I know not why, but the word Danbury came so suddenly upon me, that my heart sunk within me; but, soon recovering myself, I said, 'And how far may we be from that hill?' 'If,' replied the lady, 'we could gain its summit in a direct line, its distance would not, I think, exceed five or six leagues, but the road necessary to be passed is so full of windings, that the circumambulations, which are altogether unavoidable, will make it full ten leagues, saying nothing for the badness of the roads, which, as you yourself will soon witness, will add as much to the fatigue of the journey as the distance.' Seeing that I looked very grave, she went on:—'But, my dear lady, I hope this report is not the occasion of your thoughtfulness. My house is perfectly at your service; and I promise you that we shall not permit you to leave us until you are provided with an equipage proper to appear before the baron; and if you will accept of my company, I will myself attend you to Gay Bowers, which is in reality a delightful situation.' This new instance of Lady Tracy's delicacy and feeling called forth the warmest expressions of gratitude on my part. 'But,' added I, 'my duty requires me to use all the expedition that lies in my power to pay the homage that is due to the brother of my father, my guardian and sole protector.' She then grasped my hand, and with a smile replied, 'We will settle that point to-morrow, and, I doubt not, to your entire satisfaction.' I bowed, and was silent. The height of the enclosures had long shut out from us the beauties of the distant prospect, and the road became so exceedingly bad, that the rest of the passage would have been tiresome to the last degree, had not the sprightliness of the conversation, kept alive by the exertions of the good Lady Tracy, and supported by her lovely daughter, reconciled even the fatigue to me.

"It was nearly sunset before we reached Blericay, and the carriage stopped at the lady's residence. It was an old mansion in the middle of the town; it wore, however, the appearance of grandeur, being ornamented in the front with a kind of cloister, having six painted arches on each side, supported by a double row of clustered pillars. The principal entrance was raised from the ground, and the ascent was made by massy steps of stone. The apartments within, though

by no means grandly furnished, were exceedingly neat. The hall was hung with tapestry, and the pavement strewed with clean rushes. She now, with great good nature, took me by the hand, and bidding me welcome, led me to an inner apartment, where the table was covered for dinner. She entreated me to be seated, and I was accommodated with a carved stool, and cushion handsomely embroidered. It was quite dark before the dinner was over; and, after the dessert was removed, Lady Tracy, with her accustomed good humour, related several diverting stories to amuse us until the hour was come for our retirement. The board, indeed, was spread for supper, but the dinner had been so late, that none of us chose to participate in what was set before us. It was then agreed upon between the young lady and her mother, that the former should sleep with me. I readily acquiesced, for there was a vivacity in her manner that I was much taken with; and besides, the gloominess of my thoughts required the cheerfulness of such a companion to prevent the increase of their influence. The good lady then summoned the family to prayers, and herself performed the office of chaplain. That duty being over, she took her leave of us; and my fair companion, dispensing with the service of her gentlewoman, conducted me herself to the chamber prepared for our reception. Here, as in other parts of the mansion, I found all things extremely neat and convenient. We went to bed, and my companion, being somewhat fatigued with her journey, soon fell asleep. For my part, it was a long time before I could follow her example, and I had not long closed my eyes before both of us were awakened by a sudden cry of horror. The room was illuminated by an unusual glare, and we heard distinctly the dreadful vociferations of 'Fire! fire!' 'For Heaven's sake, my dear lady,' cried I, 'arise, for the house is on fire, and we shall perish in the flames.' The fright had such an effect upon her, that she made no attempt to move from her bed. I hastily, however, slipped on my kirtle, which I girt around me, and cast over that my mantle and wimple, and then throwing her mantle over her shoulders, absolutely dragged her to the door, which I no sooner opened than the flames burst in upon us. The house was in a blaze, and no hope of escape remained to us by that avenue. Presently a man appeared at the window, mounted upon a ladder which had been placed against the house. 'Save yourself, lady,' said he; 'you can descend this ladder.' 'Save first,' said I, 'Lady Tracy's daughter.' 'Where is she?' said the man. 'Here,' said I, faintly, 'upon the bed; for God's sake, come in, and help me to convey her from destruction.' Having prevailed upon him to enter the room, I wrapped her in her night-mantle, and wound my coat hard over it by way of bandage, and he, with my assistance, conveyed her down the ladder, totally unconscious of what was passing. I followed as quickly as possible, and had not quitted the ladder before the floor of the room gave way. A volume of flames burst from the window, so that one minute's delay had rendered our destruction inevitable. I was terrified by the awful sight, and jumping from the ladder, missed my footing, and fell upon the green sward, but providentially without receiving any other injury than a light sprain in my left ankle. I cannot clearly recollect in what manner I descended the ladder, but from a small contusion

I afterwards found upon my ankle, and a scratch or two upon my left arm, I conceive I must have fallen before I reached the bottom. The effects of the fresh air had recalled my fair companion. She began to speak, but the sentences she uttered were so wild and incoherent, that it was evident her senses were much disordered. For my own part, my situation was little preferable. I stood fixed as it were to the ground, alternately looking at her, and at the horrible destruction made by the devouring element; when the young man who had saved us from destruction entreated us to quit the garden, where he gently raised the young lady from the green sward upon which she was seated, and supporting her on the one side, while I, who much needed assistance myself, did the best I could in her behalf on the other. He conducted us to a neat little cottage, inhabited by his mother, about a quarter of a mile from the town. The good old dame, alarmed by the dreadful disaster, was below in her night-clothes. My companion was perfectly well-known to her; and when she learned from her son that I appeared to be an intimate acquaintance in the family, she made no distinction between us. She cast a faggot upon the embers, to prevent our taking cold, and having warmed some elder wine, prevailed upon us to take a small portion, which she assured us would be for our good. In the mean time, her son was gone back to the fire, to give what assistance was in his power, and had promised to return as soon as he could learn the event of the dreadful conflagration. The distance of the cottage from Tracy-house ensured our safety; but at intervals we could plainly hear the outcries of the people, and the crackling of the timber consuming in the flames, which filled my mind with terror; and I was exceedingly anxious to learn the situation of the good lady, with her other daughter. After my companion had taken a small drop of the elder wine, she seemed for a few moments more composed; but recollecting the danger whence she had escaped, she started up before I was aware, and ran towards the door. It was with much difficulty we could prevail upon her to remain in the house: she insisted on retiring home to save her mother, or perish with her. We pacified her by the assurance that every assistance was exerted in behalf of her mother: that the young man who had saved our lives was actually there, and, we doubted not, would return in a few minutes with the joyful tidings of her dear relation's welfare. Dame Grey (for so the good woman was called under whose friendly roof we were now sheltered, had brought from her chamber a neat night-dress, which being made warm, she prevailed on the young lady to put them on, apologising for their homeliness, and at the same time assisting her. I now heard a gentle tap at the door, which I opened. Here I met our preserver, and, from the dejection in his countenance, presaged some disastrous tidings. I therefore placed myself between him and young Lady Tracy, and made a signal with my hand to retire. He conceived my meaning, and withdrew. I followed him as gently as possible, and when we had an opportunity of speaking without being overheard by the young lady, he told me that the event of the fire was inconceivably dreadful; that Lady Tracy, her daughter, and several of the domestics, were buried beneath the ruins. 'Holy saints!' cried I, clasping my hands together,

and hardly able to support myself, 'how shall I communicate these dreadful tidings to the daughter, and not occasion her death by the horrid recital!' My absence had not passed unnoticed by the hapless lady, and upon my return she clasped me in her arms, exclaiming, in such doleful accents as pierced me to the soul, 'where is my mother? Where is my sister? Oh, speak to me! Holy Satyrs, you turn away! The horror of your countenance indicates too plainly that they are lost, and I am'—here a flood of tears prevented her utterance. She leaned upon my shoulder, and sobbed so bitterly, it would have unnerved the hardest heart, and melted it with sympathetic sorrow. This was a severe trial for me, myself an object of pity. My own griefs rankled in my mind, to which were added the horrors of a friend's despondency, and my spirits were nearly exhausted, when her aunt, who resided at a little distance from the town, having heard of the unhappy fate of her sister and niece, and learning from the good dame's son, whom she met accidentally, that the eldest daughter had escaped from the flames, rushed into the room, and in agony of sorrow pressed her to her breast. They bathed each others bosoms with heart-rending tears, and so soon as excess of grief allowed her the use of speech, the affectionate relative exclaimed, 'Oh, my fortunate child! or shall I rather call you unfortunate in escaping! Thou livest indeed, but it is to deplore the loss of a tender mother and affectionate sister!' At these words the hapless young lady fainted a second time. As soon as she recovered sufficiently to be removed with safety, her aunt caused her to be carried to a litter, which was waiting at the door for that purpose. To me, who of course was a perfect stranger to her, she returned her thanks, and the good woman of the house, promising that her hospitable assiduities should not be passed over without reward.

"Till this moment I had not reflected upon my own share in this dreadful calamity. I had lost the casket containing the wealth which my friend had put into my hands, and except three angels of gold, with a few small pieces of silver which chanced to be in my gipsire, and attached to my girdle, I was totally destitute of money. I then considered the uncouthness of my equipment, with a night-mantle over my kirtle, without my corset and under-tunic. My wimple, indeed, was very full and long, and perfectly concealed the want of my head adorments; but how, thought I, shall the daughter of Lady Darcy make her appearance before a haughty uncle in such a disguise? I have no carriage to take me thither, nor servants to attend upon me, nor suitable habiliments to equip myself. I must approach him like an outcast, with no one to introduce me, and perhaps he will spurn me from his door, without listening to my tale of sorrows. These reflections, and the fatigue I had sustained, were too much for my exhausted spirits to support. I sunk under them, and was deprived of sensation for several hours, giving the good woman of the house much trouble, which I was ill provided to repay.

"The next morning I was totally unable to rise, and Dame Grey began to be seriously alarmed on my account. I was well convinced that my stay was inconvenient, and for that reason proposed to hire a horse, with a guide, to conduct me to Gay

Bowers; but she, judging much better of my strength than I seemed to do for myself, would not permit me to think of undertaking such a journey that day. 'You are going then, my lady, to the Baron Saint Clerc.' 'I am,' said I, 'indeed, for the Baron of Saint Clerc is my uncle.' I had no sooner uttered these words than Dame Grey dropped me a low curtsey, and replied, 'I wish I had known that before, my dear lady, your ladyship may command both me and mine. You have had, in sooth, but a rough welcome,—the more's the pity. In good sooth, this house, and the farm we occupy, belong to the Baron of Saint Clerc's estate; I and my son be his tenants. If your ladyship thinks it proper, the boy shall go over to Gay Bowers, and inform the baron your uncle of the mischance which has happened, and he will, no doubt, come over himself to fetch you, or send a more suitable equipage than can be provided here.' I thanked her for her past favours, which I promised her should not be obliterated from my memory, but positively refused her offer of sending her son to my uncle, adding, 'I shall myself, no doubt, be able to undertake the journey to-morrow. I am not personally known to him, because I have been from England the greater part of my life, and I do not wish to apprise him of my arrival in this country, until I can do it in person, for he is the only near relation I have now living.' The good old dame appeared to be perfectly satisfied with my objections, and sent for a leech to visit me, who assured me that I ought not to be removed for a day or two. After I had taken a little refreshment, he sent me a draught, which was to promote rest, and having laid myself down upon the bed, I fell asleep."

CHAPTER XI.

Lady Emma's History continued.

"Dame Grey, it seems, acquainted the leech with the relationship I claimed to the baron, and he advised her, by all means, to send her son over to Gay Bowers, without saying any thing farther to me upon the subject, 'which,' says he, 'the baron cannot help taking in good part;' and he himself penned the letter, by which my uncle was informed of my arrival at Billericay, and of the misfortune which had happened to me in that place. When Francis, the young man who preserved me from the flames, being mounted upon a good horse, set off express for my uncle's mansion, with orders to return as speedily as possible. I did not awake until it was nearly evening; when, finding myself much revived, I dressed myself in the best manner I could, and went down stairs. Dame Grey was seated at the window, but did not move herself at my approach. I thanked her for the favours she had done me, and repeated my promise, never to forget her good services. To this she coolly replied, without turning her head towards me, 'Why, as to that matter, my lady, as you are pleased to call yourself, it may be so. You are welcome to all that I have done, 'tis true; but, at the same time, one does not always know who one has to deal with, and charity begins at home.' I was much astonished at this sudden alteration in her behaviour, and begged to know if I had unwittingly given her any cause of

offence. 'I cannot say so,' replied she; 'but I find that all is not gold which glitters,—he judges often falsely, who judges from the outside only.' I could not, by any means, trace out the consistency of these sarcastic saws, nor divine how they could be justly applied to myself; yet the cool indifference manifested by her behaviour, and the dry manner in which they were spoken, plainly precluded any other explication; and therefore I begged of her to speak out with plainness and sincerity. 'That letter, I am told,' said she, 'will spare me the trouble; no doubt you are a scholar, and can read it.' She then held out a folded paper, superscribed, and which had been sealed, but was now broken open. I cast my eyes partly over the contents, without reading them; and when I saw for the signature the name of Gaston de Saint Clerc, I trembled, and felt the blood recoil from my cheeks. The old dame took these emotions for positive proofs of my guilt, and said, with a sarcastic sneer, 'Adad, my fine young mistress, but now your wings will be clipped, I trow.' Not heeding her apostrophe, I read the epistle, which was couched in these words:

'DAME GRAY,

'If I did not conceive that your credulity had subjected you to the impositions of an artful deceiver, I should suspect that you had conspired with her to cheat me. However, as a proof of your sincerity, I expect you will instantly, upon the receipt of these lines, turn her out of your doors; and, at the same time, inform the cozening queen from me, that if I should hear any more about her, I will consign her ladyship to the care of the keeper of Chelmsford prison, who is the proper warden for such self-created title-bearers. For your own satisfaction, I can assure you, that I have authentic documents to prove the death of my real cousin in Flanders two years back. If I am not obeyed, I shall, without hesitation, send a neighbour of mine to take possession of the farm you held from me; therefore, I advise you not to make an enemy of your friend,

'GASTON SAINT CLERC.'

"The language contained in this epistle was shocking to humanity; but I was equally surprised that my arrival at Billericay should have been known to Gaston Saint Clerc, or that he should have written instead of his father, the baron. Dame Gray observed by my perplexity, and judging, from my silence, that I had nothing to say in my own defence, was confirmed in the opinion she had formed of my duplicity; and therefore addressed me in the following terms:—'I am very sorry, my pretty dame, that you should have forfeited every just title to respect, and taken upon yourself a character which does not belong to you. You see that I am under the necessity of fulfilling my landlord, the baron's order.' She was proceeding in her speech, when I interrupted her, saying, 'Your landlord! and Gaston de Saint Clerc! and not from the baron? The baron's name is Eustace.' 'By my fay,' said she, 'my fine young lady, you must leave your story better another time. Eustace de Saint Clerc has been dead a full twelve months come latter Lammas; and, poor gentleman, he had been confined to his room many months before; and our Lord Gaston succeeded to his estates and titles. But to the purpose; I am grieved to turn you from my doors, but I have no alternative: to retain you is to ruin myself, for the baron never threatens but he performs. I can only add, that you are welcome to what has been done. Go, in God's name, and, if my advice

may be worth your listening to, take heed how you offend the baron again; for, in his justice, he never looks at mercy.' To this I answered, 'Your suspicions do not excite my surprise; they naturally arises from the appearance of the circumstances, and justify your conduct; but, as I have truth and justice on my side, far other thoughts than those impelled by guilt occupy my mind. I again thank you for the kindness I have received at your hands, and on no account will be further burthensome. The dreadful calamity of last night has robbed me of all my money, excepting these few pieces of gold; take them, and, believe me, I am sincerely sorry I have it not in my power to reward you more amply.' So saying, I reached my hand with the money towards her; but, rising hastily, she gently put my hand aside, saying, 'No; by the holy rood, I will not touch one single cross.' Here her son Francis entered the room, and I requested him to accept of the gold, as a token of my gratitude, but not as a reward in any degree adequate to the important services he had rendered me. But the good dame straightly interposed, saying, 'The knave, I trust, knows better than to take it. Merely upon us, we be not hard-hearted, and besides, we should add to your distressful situation; but know,' added she, 'there is something so soft and so innocent in your deportment, that I will not rigidly enforce the harsh command of my master. It is late; you are a stranger here, and know not where to go. You shall sleep here this night, and to-morrow, farewell; and may the blessed Mary, the Mother of God, defend you.' This friendly offer I positively refused, being determined that she should not incur the baron's displeasure upon my account; but begged permission for Francis to take me to some inn in the town, where I might be accommodated with a room to myself. My request was rudely complied with; and after I had taken leave of Dame Gray, her son conducted me to a small tavern at the entrance of the town, which was kept by a widow, an acquaintance of theirs; and after having recommended me warmly to the care of the hostess, he wished me good speed, and withdrew. I was then lighted to my bedroom, and having dismissed the chambermaid with a strict charge not to permit me to be disturbed, I locked the door and threw myself upon the bed, and bathed the pillow with a flood of tears. Now, all the misery of my present situation flowed upon my labouring mind, and a thousand perplexing apprehensions prevailed in succession. I saw myself a suspected stranger in my own country, overwhelmed in poverty and disgrace; deserted by every one about me, and spurned from the hearth of the only relation I could apply to, and from whom I had a right to expect protection. I now recollect, with horror, that the tide-deeds of my mother's jointure, and the letters which I had received from my benevolent benefactor in Beaumont, were consumed in the flames, for I had sewed them between the linings of my bonnet for safety's sake. I had, therefore, no voucher to bring forward in proof that I really was the daughter of Lady Darcy; and perhaps, said I, this hard-hearted relation will carry his threats into execution, and I may in reality be thrown into a prison to perish there. How dare I, then, commit my appeal to this cruel relation? and yet, I have no means of subsistence, but what depends upon him; I have no garment to cover me, saving those upon my back; and they are strangely suited to each other; and the small portion of coin which is remaining will presently be expended. While I was thus grie-

nesting upon the 'mysteries which surrounded me, I heard a gentle rap at my door: I raised my head from my pillow, and listened with attention, when I heard the rapping repeated. I then rose from my bed, and going to the door, inquired if any one was there. A female voice replied, 'It is I.' I thought I recognised the voice of my uncle's tenant. I opened the door, and found I was not deceived. She entreated to speak a word or two with me; upon which I desired her to walk in, and pointed to a stool with a cushion, while I seated myself upon the side of the bed.

'I hope you will pardon my intrusion,' said she, 'and the more particularly, as I was told below that you had given orders not to be disturbed; but, in very truth, I have been exceedingly uneasy in my mind ever since you left my poor dwelling. Mercy on me! I fear I was too hasty; and I have chid myself a thousand times for showing you the naughty letter.' 'Indeed then, my good dame,' said I, sighing, 'you have done yourself much wrong. You have acted very properly; every prudent person, in like circumstances, would have done the same. You have every reason to suspect me to be an impostor; I have no means at present to clear up my character; but, even if I had, it would be dangerous for you to countenance me; while I am disengaged by my nearest relation, and that relation your landlord. Indeed, my dear dame,' added I, rising, and taking her by the hand, 'I have much to thank you for, but nothing to lay to your charge.' She grasped my hand, while the tears stood in her eyes; and, looking me earnestly in the face, exclaimed, 'Oh, blessed queen of heaven! this innocent is wronged. I am, indeed, a poor silly woman; yet I can see something in your countenance that speaks for itself. Well, but to my business; though I may not help thee openly, I can, I know, in secret do thee some service. You must know, that my husband's sister was married to the family at Folkestone-Darey; and I have heard her speak of you, as it was 'you she married.' 'And 'tis of my brother,' said I, hastily; 'for I have heard my honoured mother say, that she 'twas attended upon us both.' 'I have heard her mention the young lord also,' said the dame. 'And where is this good woman?' added I: 'Where does she live? Can I see her? Oh, tell me, I beseech you.' 'One moment's patience, my dear lady; and I will tell you. This self-same goodly residence at Great Baddow, in the way to Danbury, and, perchance, it will be your wish to see her.' 'See her, my dear friend!' cried I;—I grasped her hand in ecstasy of joy.—'You are my good angel! You have, in a few words, re-assured my dying hope, and mitigated the poison of my sorrow. See her! yes, certainly, this moment, if possible. Her testimony will be equal in strength to the documents I brought from Flanders, and which were concealed in my trunks. There are strong circumstances impressed upon my mind, which I have learned from my mother; which cannot fail of proof, if she was in reality our master. 'Enough, enough,' said the old dame; 'she was your nurse, and I have heard her say so.' I hastily replied, 'Then I am happy; I—oh, let me see her before I sleep!' 'That cannot be, my dear lady,' answered the dame; 'for, though the distance is more than two leagues, it is now late, the night is dark, and the road is extremely bad. It will be impossible to travel it without imminent danger; to-morrow—' 'To-morrow, then, I will see her,' answered I; 'her evidence will, I doubt not, convince my uncle, and restore me to my rights.'

"My good benefactor was perfectly convinced that I was no impostor, and entreated me to return with her to the cottage; that, however, I positively refused; 'for whatever may happen,' said I, 'it will be imprudent for you to give offence to the baron, by disobeying his commands.' She then begged me to take some refreshment, and, before I could prevent her, positively ordered it. I ate part of a chicken, and drank a small cup of warm claret, made rich with spices; and then we consulted together respecting the proper method of prosecuting the business of the following day. It was first proposed that Francis should bring his aunt from Baddow; but it occurred to me, that we should thereby occasion an unnecessary delay, and that it would be better for me to go to Baddow myself, and take the nurse with me to Gay Bowers, without giving the baron the least previous notice. This step was agreed to; and the good dame promised that Francis should wait upon me early in the morning, with a safe little hobby for me to ride, and himself conduct me to Baddow. 'And if, my dear young lady,' said she, 'things should fall out unfavourably, speak not of him, nor of me either, but anyone who turned you from my doors.'

"It was now late, and my benefactor advised me to go to bed, saying she would sit by the bedside till night to keep me company; and it was with much difficulty I could prevail upon her, to use her own term, to be 'aid nay.' After her departure I fastened the door; and having made my evening visage, laid myself upon the bed, but without putting off my clothes. My mind was greatly tranquillised by the prospect of success; for I doubted not but the evidence of the nurse would quiet all the scruples which had arisen in the mind of the baron, and compel him to acknowledge me; and I ardently wished for the return of day.

"In the midst of these cogitations, sleep stole upon me drowsively, and I was not awakened, until by a gentle knock at the door, which announced the arrival of my benefactress. She held a parcel in her hand, which contained a pair of new hose of say, a pair of cordovan shoes, that laced upon the instep; and a new kirtle of Samite, with a bodice belonging to the same. 'These,' says she, 'you must borrow of me.' Seeing that I appeared surprised at the offer, she went on: 'And, indeed, I must not be refined, for I know you cannot possibly do without them. No doubt, my lady,' added she, 'you will soon change them for others more suitable to your rank, and then you will send them back.' She then insisted upon assisting me in putting them on; and I besought her to accept of my night-mantle, which was very rich and elegantly embroidered; but she would not accede to my such proposal, saying, the mantle was absolutely necessary for my comfort, and that she had not bought one requisite to be returned by another equally needful.

"I now partook of some refreshment which she had ordered, and when I called for the hostler's compt, I was informed that the whole was discharged. This new obligation, which my benefactress had conferred upon me, brought the tears into my eyes. I grasped her hand, and implored the lady to bless and protect her and her son, who came with the horses. I was mounted upon that which had been provided for me; and having again expressed my gratitude to the good dame, I parted from her, and I much fear to meet no more."

CHAPTER XII.

Lady Emma's History continued—Her Interview with her Cousin.

"Francis, by his mother's orders, took me down a by-lane, by the back of the town, because she justly judged that the sight of the mouldering ruins of Tracy-house would recall to my recollection the dreadful horrors of the night, and by affecting my spirits very powerfully, add much to the weariness of my journey.

"I learned from my guide, that the conflagration made its first appearance in Lady Tracy's bed-chamber, and burnt with such rapidity, that it was nearly consumed before the flames had communicated themselves to the other parts of the dwelling; so that it was not possible to render the unfortunate lady and her daughter the least assistance. Several of the female servants, who slept in the adjoining apartments, were missing; and others, who had escaped, were scorched in a terrible manner. It was impossible to ascertain from what cause the calamity originated; but various conjectures, of course, were substituted in the place of positive information. But I am wandering from the subject; and, therefore, I will here close my observations upon this melancholy catastrophe.

"We reached Baddow at the third hour, when the matin's-bell was ringing, and Francis conducted me immediately to the residence of his aunt, who fortunately happened to be at home. She desired her nephew to show me into the parlour, and followed presently herself. She was rather short in stature, and somewhat inclined to be corpulent; but exceedingly neat and cleanly, both in her dress and person. She was turned of sixty, but her countenance was a mixture of health and good humour. 'My nephew tells me,' said she, 'that your ladyship would speak with me.' 'I have a question or two,' said I, 'which you will greatly oblige me by answering circumstantially; because your answers are likely to be of much importance to me.' She bowed her head in token of compliance, and I inquired if she was the person who had usually attended Lady Darcy as a nurse? To which she readily answered, 'Yes, my good lady, I am indeed. I nursed all madam's children, and, woe the while! I lost a kind benefactress, when her honour, with her dear little babes, went into foreign parts. Mercy 'pon us, young lady, times are mainly changed since then! That noble family is no more, and his honour at Gay Bowers has neither chick nor child; so that, with him, another honourable title falls to the ground. His honour is hugely rich; but what then? there is many a yeoman in this village that keeps a much warmer house than he—but poor folks should hear, see, and say nothing.' 'Perhaps,' answered I, smiling at her loquacity, 'it may, at times, be prudent for them so to do; but I think Lady Darcy had but two children when she went abroad.' 'No mere, my good lady. Three sweet babes died in their nonage, and my lord and madam began to think they should not have any of their children to live; but there came the young Lord Henry, a charming baby. I can assure you, he was as strong as a horse at six weeks old: he was the very simile of the baron, his father; had the same look with his eyes; and I warrant, in like manner, he would stamp with his little foot, when he was angry. Never were two peas more alike, than young Lord Henry and his honour the baron.'

"The mention the nurse made of my dear unfortunate brother brought a flood of tears into my eyes; the affection with which she spoke of him made me love her. Seeing me weep, she was surprised, and with much appearance of solicitude said, 'Did you know the young lord?' To which I answered, 'Yes; I knew him well. But do you recollect the other child?' 'Recollect her!' cried she, hastily. 'God forgive me, I should sooner forget my own son than that sweet baby! Tom was weaned that I might give my dear Lady Emma the breast. She was the sweetest lamb, and so fond of her poor nurse. I warrant me cried a whole week when I parted with her; the dear little lady cried to see me cry, and held out its arms to come to me again. O, 'twas a perilous parting! Lady Darcy obliged me to quit the room, for there was no standing its weeping while I remained there; but,' added she, shaking her head, and wiping away the tears which were starting from her eyes, 'old Gaunt, the Baron of Saint Cler's steward, who stopped here on his way to Chelmsford market on Friday last, informed me that his lordship had received letters from beyond sea, announcing the death of that dear young lady. It almost broke my heart to hear on't.' 'But supposing,' said I, 'that this report should be without foundation,—supposing the lady now living and in England, could you, after so long an absence, together with the great alteration which takes place in the features of an infant as it approaches to womanhood,—could you, I say, at this time recognise your nuralling, and distinguish her from another person?' 'Yes, marry, and in good sooth, I can,' said she. 'I cannot be deceived; Heaven knows I cannot, to my sorrow, for I was innocently the occasion of it: she has a scar I am confident she will carry with her to the grave; and by that scar I can distinguish her from a thousand, if other proof be not sufficient.' I was astonished at this part of the nurse's discourse, for I certainly did not know I had ever received any wound that had left a scar behind it; and I began to think she had attributed to me some accident that might have befallen one of my sisters, and therefore I requested her to tell me if she should know her, supposing that proof to be wanting.' 'In sooth, I think so,' said she. Upon this I removed my veil, and threw back the wimple, so that my face was entirely uncovered, saying at the same time, 'Suppose now that I should declare myself to be the daughter of the baron—' She surveyed me earnestly. I paused, that I might not give her any interruption. She came nearer to me, and after looking some time, exclaimed, 'Saint Bridget protect me! they are the very features of my Lady Darcy—the very arch of her eyebrow—the nose—the mouth—her shape too, and the fall of the shoulders—the very model of my lady.' Here she remained silent, still viewing me anxiously, and I went on—'Suppose that I should say, on the merning I was committed to your care, a wode-woman put into your hands a paper for a small piece of silver.' 'By the mass, I well remember that naughty paper,' said she, interrupting me; 'my lady was main angry.' 'And I will tell thee,' continued I, 'the cause of her anger. The woman told you it contained an abstract of the fortune which should befall the infant.' 'O, 'tis as true as the primer!' quoth she. 'Lady Darcy,' added I, 'considered it an idle nonsense; and because it forboded much evil to the child, took it from thee under pretence of burning it, which, however, she did not perform. I have heard her repeat it frequently, and its contents are these—'

In foreign climes yfrowns thy fate,
Here woe and wayment thee await,
• Forlorn must thou be;
Nor can thy wayward fortune mend
Till death gives back a stowleworth friend,
To break the chains of cark, and set thee free."

"In truth," said she, "it was something like it. I wot me well it was a doleful threatening. Heaven preserve you, my dear young lady; for surely you resemble my honoured mistress. May I hope—that smile bids me hope;—for the sake of Heaven, permit me to remove your wimple; I will not discompose it worth mentioning." I bowed down my head to accommodate her the better. She turned back the folding from my left ear, and drew down the gorget beneath it, her hands trembling from the agitation she was in; when on a sudden she gave a loud shriek, clasped her hands together, and exclaimed, "It is indeed my dear child! It is the daughter of Lady Darcy, her own dear self!" So saying, she burst into tears, fell upon her knees before me, kissed my hands, and threw her arms about me, as though she was afraid I should vanish from her. It was a long time before I could pacify her. She repeated the avemarie several times, and gave thanks to almost every saint in the Litany, because they had permitted her to see me once more, and uttered a thousand tender expressions, which, though clothed in the garb of rusticity, evinced the warm effusions of her heart. Her kindness greatly affected me, and I could not help weeping in concert with her. So soon as these transports subsided, I informed her of the letter which her sister had sent to Gay Bowers, and the answer my cousin had returned her. She shook her head, and was going to speak, but I prevented her by going on—"A false report," said I, "of my death, it appears, has been propagated abroad, which, by some means or another, has reached the baron's ears, and this will easily account for his angry letter. It remains for me to do away every prejudice, and establish my pretensions with him beyond the reach of doubt. For this reason, I think it will be highly proper for you to accompany me to Gay Bowers, if you will so far oblige me." "Oblige me, my dear young mistress," said the nurse; "ay, forsooth, I would go to Pagan-land and back again to do you service." I grasped her hand, and with a smile replied, "My dear nurse, I hope I shall not need so arduous a proof of your affection; but it will be necessary for us to proceed without delay to my uncle's residence, and, if you please, I will instantly bespeak post-horses for the purpose." To this she also assented; and having arranged a few domestic concerns, was presently prepared for the journey. For the accommodation of her husband when he returned from his labour, she left the key of the house with her next door neighbour. I would by no means permit Francis to go any further with me, but sent him back with my best thanks to his mother, desiring him at the same time to inform her that her sister was perfectly satisfied.

"It was somewhat turned of upon when we arrived at Gay Bowers, where I was surprised by the sight of a stately manor running hastily to ruins. The grass was growing upon the top of the walls, and part of them were already fallen into the surrounding moat. The outer court were the appearance of the entrance to a desolated cavern, rather than the approach to the dwelling of a person of wealth. The casements of the house were most of them broken, and in many places patched with

boards, to supply want of glass. In short, every part of the edifice indicated the miserable disposition of its owner. The steward, who attended in the hall, and acted also in the place of a porter, was habited in the fashion of the last century. The embroidery upon his tunic, and the badge of the Saint Cleres which was wrought upon the front, appeared so imperfectly that it could not readily be distinguished; and the tunic itself, which formerly had been blue, was so tattered and patched, and covered with grease, that the pristine colour was nearly obliterated. His person was as remarkable as his dress; a tall, meagre figure, with a few locks of hair upon the back part of his head, and those perfectly white; his visage was long, his eyes sunk deeply into the sockets, and his cheek-bones high and prominent. I thought, in sooth, he resembled an inhabitant of the charnel-house, rather than an animated being. With a low and hollow voice, affecting at the same time great solemnity, he inquired who I was, and what brought me thither. I told him it was my wish to speak with the Baron Saint Clere upon some business of great importance. He then desired me to wait in the hall, and stalked away with much gravity through a passage which led to the interior part of the mansion, and took no notice of my companion, who seemed somewhat hurt upon the occasion, and said, "This walking atom, I trow, does not remember me here; but, in good sooth, he knows me passing well when he takes a horn of ale or two with me at Baddow; ay, and finds my house as readily as my pullets find their roosts." I could not help smiling at the good dame's observation, but made no reply.

"During the absence of the steward, which was somewhat prolonged, I cast my eyes over the furniture of the hall; and here an equal appearance of wretchedness displayed itself with that so strikingly obvious upon the outside of the mansion. The hangings of stately tapestry were torn in a hundred places, and through the lacerations exposed the naked walls. The suits of armour, which had anciently belonged to the heroes of the family of Saint Clere celebrated for their valour in the Holy Wars, were covered with dust, and falling away piecemeal from their stands. The seat of state was stripped of all its ornaments, the hawks' perches were broken down, and cobwebs concealed the carvings, with other rich embellishments of the roof, from the eye of the spectator. Here hospitality, as I have heard my mother say, delighted once to dwell; but here I found no vestige of her footsteps.

"The steward returned, and we were formally ushered to the presence of the lord of this vast ruin. I found him to be a diminutive man, crooked in his person, and ill-favoured. His dark brows hung over his eyes like pent-houses, but his eyes themselves were sharp and piercing. He was seated at a table, and several writings lay before him. As we approached, he cast his eyes upon me, and surveyed me with so much earnestness, that he put me to the blush. At length he addressed me with a shrill tone of voice, saying, "Well, woman, and what is your will with me?" "Sir," said I, "is your name Gaston de Saint Clere?" "That is my name," answered he; "and what of that?" "Had you not once a sister?" To this question he replied in the affirmative, and I went on:—"That sister was married to John, Lord Darcy"—"Hold," cried he, "I shall not answer thee any farther." He then examined some folded papers which were scattered upon the table, and having selected one, he opened it, saying, "Yes, this is it;" and then, surveying me

a second time with a contemptuous air, he said, 'You wrote me, I think, from Billericay.' I assured him I did not. 'Well, then,' added he, pettishly, 'the letter was written at your desire?' This I also denied. 'Do you mean to say, then,' quoth he, 'that you are not acquainted with the contents of that letter?' To this I answered, 'When it was sent I did not know them, nor do I now but imperfectly.' 'Perhaps, then,' added he, 'you are equally ignorant respecting the answer I returned.' 'No, sir, I saw the cruel answer; and, in defiance of the threatenings it contained, I am come to claim my right—wretched female orphan's right. That answer thrust me from the cottage where humanity had given me entrance; and last night saw the defenceless daughter of Anne de Saint Clerc, by your command, cast out from the residence of your dependent.' He, nothing moved, retorted with a sarcastic grin, 'I'll tell thee what, my good daughter of Anne de Saint Clerc, if you do not presently follow the advice contained in that same letter—' 'Well, what then?' cried I, hastily interrupting him. 'Why then,' continued he, 'I shall send for the constable of this district, and put these threats in execution.' I had no conception, previous to this interview, that I should have been courageous enough to support such a debasing conversation; but this last insult, instead of depressing my spirits, roused all my soul within me. 'Look you, sir,' said I, 'the heir of the Darcys stands before you—she claims your protection—nature demands it from you—humanity commands it—and I will assert my right; for let me tell you, sir, there is but one way for you to secure yourself, and shut out my complaints.' 'And what is that?' cried he, eagerly. 'To murder me.' He started back. 'That done, perhaps,' continued I, 'it may be proper to silence this witness in my favour.' Here I beckoned the nurse to come forward, and presented her to him. She had not much attracted his notice; but upon her approach, he presently recognised her features, for she was well known in the family. He appeared confused at the sight of her, and striking his hand upon the table, exclaimed, 'What, is the devil's name, brings you here? Oh, I perceive now, this is a plot, a combination!' 'I beseech your honour,' said the good dame, 'not to have such hard thoughts of me; I be an honest woman, and have served in this house, and in the noble house at Foleshant Darcy, ever since I was a child; and your honour's mother, God send her soul! was main fond of me, and on the very day this young lady, her grand-daughter, was born, gave to me a fine rosary of coral beads gauded with silver, and ten months—let me see—yes, it was ten months and one day, I remember now, upon the eve of the holy Saint Michael—' 'Curse upon your prolixity!' cried he, with much impatience, 'What is to be the upshot of all this caterwauling?' 'I be telling your honour, so be it your honour will hear me. Well, upon the eve of the festival, I went to hear holy mass; this dear little infant was then teething, and I warrant it was so cross, for its precious gums were mainly swelled, and not having the coral at hand, I took the cross at the end of the rosary to nib them withal; and seeing it was pleased with the gauds, I counted them over and over to pacify it; at last it grasped the cross in its little hand, and flourishing it about, as infants are wont to do with their playthings, I warrant me it struck the joint at the top, which was as sharp as a thwittle's point, into the skin behind its left ear, and laid the bone bare the length of my thumb joint. I was aside my wits to see how it bled, and dared not

for the world say a word to madam. The house-leech closed up the wound, and it was healed, and no one but he and I knew any thing of the matter; but the scar remained, and there it remains to this blessed day.' 'How long was this ago?' said he; 'answer me without hesitation.' She readily complied, 'Why, your honour, it will be just nineteen years come the time.' 'Your memory is good,' quoth he, musing. 'O, your honour, I was so aghast, that I shall remember it to my dying day: the dear little innocent did so pule and cry, I warrant it nearly broke my heart.' 'I would,' said he, angrily, 'it had broken your neck.' 'Not so, your honour,' quoth the dame, 'for, as I hope for mercy, it was unwittingly done, in sooth it was; and on that very day se'night, my husband's best cow, Wide Horns, died, and poor Tom fell into the horsepond.' 'And what the devil has all this to do with the matter?' cried he. 'Why, your honour,' continued she, 'Tom was then thirteen months old, and at Martlemas-tide next he will be—' 'Hold thy prating,' said he, interrupting her; 'the noise of a rookery, or the chattering of pyes, is music compared with thy impertinence.' To this she replied, 'I was only doing my duty, your honour; and by my troth, I weened, that it would do you pleasure to hear that I could prove my lady to be no counterfeit.' The conclusion of the good dame's discourse I observed had a striking effect upon the baron's countenance, which was drawn out to a greater length than before; and clapping his hands upon his forehead, he seemed to be immersed for a few moments in deep reflection, when recovering himself, he again scrutinised my person; and at last, endeavouring to mould his features into a smile, which at best became them badly, he addressed himself to me in a mild tone of voice, saying, 'If, in good sooth, you be my relation, and the heir of the Darcy family, you have undoubtedly a claim upon me for protection. From what this woman has said, I am inclined to hope you have not dealt falsely with me. You possess, no doubt, the title-deeds of your mother's dowry; they must be produced to substantiate your claims to these estates.' Here he paused; and I, knowing they had been consumed in the horrid conflagration at Billericay, was at a loss how to frame my answer. I thought it not prudent to acquaint him at this time with that unfortunate circumstance, and I did not see how I could, consistent with the truth, evade the question. After some little hesitation, I replied, 'I have not these documents now with me, and indeed some other vouchers may be necessary, which must be obtained from Flanders.' 'From Flanders!' cried he. 'By the shrine of Saint Thomas, the wench has lost her wits! Are you aware of the sums of money which must be expended to send messengers to Flanders? Have you reckoned the time it will take them in going and coming? Gads my life, we may be dead and in our graves before they return, or what is more likely, ruined by litigious law-suits, and judgment obtained prior to the arrival of our justification. If you have left these parchments behind you in Flanders, you have, I fear, insured your ruin.' 'You much surprise me, sir, by the mention you make of law proceedings,' said I. 'The estates belonging to my mother's jointure are in your management,—you have a power assigned to you for receipt of the rents, and no one to account with but myself, for I am unfortunately the only claimant; whence then can arise this formidable judgment you have been speaking of? Surely a course of law cannot be requisite to decide upon what is right between your lordship

and myself.' To this he replied, 'I shall take an early opportunity of explaining this matter to you; and God forbid that the child of my father's sister should suffer wrong, even of a farthing!' He then desired me to be seated, for I had been standing all the time, and ordered the nurse to withdraw, which she readily did, and seemed overjoyed that he had owned me as his relation.

"When we were by ourselves, he entered into a more general conversation with me: his manner, however, was still reserved, and his questions, which were exceedingly multifarious, resembled those of an inquisitor, rather than such as one might have expected from a relation, and plainly proved that his heart was very little interested in my behalf. The answers I returned to him respecting our family, and their connexions, were replete with a variety of incidental circumstances, many of which he had been well acquainted with, and which, from the privacy of their nature, could not have been well known but to one of the family. In that he could not find the least foundation for controversy, and therefore seemed to be perfectly satisfied that I was no impostor. I gave him a detail of my misfortunes; and, at the time I related to him the dreadful occurrence respecting my brother's murder, he was affected to weep; and when I came to the dreadful calamity which so lately had befallen me at Billecay, he held out his hand, and besought me for pity's sake to spare his feelings, and drop for the present a narrative so exceedingly distressing. He then proceeded to express much sorrow for having himself unwittingly added to my distress; and to convince me that he was not so blameable as I might have conceived him to be, he put into my hands a letter in the handwriting of my dear friend at Beaumont, which he assured me he had recently received from Flanders, and in it was contained a short but formal account of my death.

"Nothing could exceed my astonishment at the sight of this letter. He had promised to me, indeed, that he would communicate to my uncle an account of my brother's murder; and yet, extraordinary as it may appear, my brother was not mentioned in it. 'Heavens, is it possible,' said I to myself, 'that so much benevolence, and so much falsehood, could at once inhabit the same bosom!' I was equally at a loss to conceive what purpose the circulation of such an idle untruth could answer, or what motive stimulated him to promulgate the same. My cousin readily perceived my agitation, for I could not conceal it, and said, 'Having seen this epistle, you will cease, perhaps, to wonder at my caution. My protection undoubtedly is due to the real heir of the Darcies; but it is, on the other hand, my duty to punish an impostor.' I bowed my head, and told him it was the demand of justice. He then rang a handbell that stood upon the table, and the steward appeared. He inquired if dinner was ready, and was told it was that moment served up. 'Well, cousin,' said he, 'you will find but poor fare with me. The times are very hard; the levies, for the support of the war, are enormous; and money so difficult to get at, that I am forced to retrench and live hard;—but such as I have, you are welcome to.' I curtsied, and thanked him; when, taking me by the hand, he led me into a dining-parlour, preceded by the steward, who ushered us to our places.

"This room, which formerly had been the room of state, was spacious and lofty, having a large window at the end, embellished with beautiful painted glass, some remnants of which appeared,

but withal so mutilated and misplaced, that none of the subjects could be traced with any degree of certainty. The hangings were of crimson bandkin, richly embroidered, but covered with dust, and in many places, broken from their fastenings, exposed the walls, and afforded asylums without number for the spiders. The stools and treasels were elegantly covered, and had been guilt; but most of them were broken, and the velvet cushions belonging to them so torn, that the bombast with which they were stuffed appeared on the outside, and, in several instances, hung down nearly to the floor. In the middle of this extensive parlour stood a small table, covered with a tattered carpet, and a diaper over it; which, I presume, from its thredbare state, had been in the family long before the present owner of the mansion was born. There were two covers upon the table; under the one was a small piece of lean mutton, and under the other a large dish full of oatmeal pottage. The middle of the table was decorated with a little platter, containing some withered, salad, and near it was placed the remnant of a loaf of barley-bread.

"My cousin kept no chaplain to give us the benedictio, nor carver to perform the honours of the table; he therefore took upon himself the performance of both offices. He helped me to a portion of the pottage; and, at the same time, made a long panegyric upon the wholesomeness of such kind of food. I could only eat a few spoonfuls, and refused to taste the mutton. 'Alas, my dear cousin,' said he, shaking his head, 'I plainly perceive that my poor table will not satisfy your better taste; you have been used to much higher living, and cannot dine without dainties. Your father, coz, I have been told, used to keep state, disdaining to eat of common meats—twenty pounds, I warrant, expended for one course. Fish must be had of the most costly kind; strange birds, and foreign fowls, the more expensive the better, to say nothing of venison and red deer, with pasties, and rich sauces: such luxuries bred disease, and lost him many of his fair estates. Glad were he was to blame.' Here I interrupted him—'Sir, he was my father.' 'Well, well,' said he, 'I have done:—he is dead, God rest his soul! but you and I have much reason to blame him.' 'In truth, I know not wherein,' answered I; 'he was a kind and tender parent.' 'Why, there it is,' replied my cousin, eagerly; 'for that very tenderness, and bringing you up with high notions, ill-proportioned to the slender means which you have to support yourself. The wealth, which should have supported you, he squandered away in riot and luxury.' 'I know not,' said I, 'of the extravagance you talk of. My father, sir, loved hospitality—my mother superintended the provision for the family; and though they lived, in some degree, as became the descendants of the Darcies and the St. Cleres, it was done without superfluity on the one hand, or parsimony on the other.' 'Perhaps,' retorted he, 'by and by, you may find, I have not misstated this matter. I see you will find it a hard case to fare as I do; and yet, Heaven knows! with all my parsimony, I find it difficult to supply my table as you see it.' 'You surprise me, sir,' said I. 'No doubt,' answered he; 'but alas! I have stood in the gap on your mother's account; and so, to our mutual loss, has my father before me, for he loved your mother, and went greater lengths for her than prudence warranted. The estates, committed to our management, were mortgaged so heavily, that large remittances have been made from our own purses; besides repairs, and various other drawbacks, by which they are

entirely eaten up. For my part, I am ready to do all that lies in my power; but it is hard that the whole of the burden should fall upon my shoulders.' 'Surely, sir,' said I, 'my mother's jointure, which descends to me, will prevent my being dependent upon any one.' 'I fear,' answered he, drawing his hand over his chin, 'you are not well informed upon this point; but it shall be discussed hereafter.' At this moment the entrance of the steward put an end to the discourse. My cousin desired him to remove the meat and the pottage, and to put the fruit upon the table, which consisted of three or four roasted crab apples, some sweetings, and half a dozen horse-plums. By way of confectionary, few carraways were brought in a saucer, with a spoonful or two of sharp capers, and a morsel of Suffolk cheese. Our drink was sour ale, and weak mead. He made several clumsy excuses for the poverty of his dessert, and repeated his fears that I should think it hard to fare as he did; and launched out afresh in praise of economy, and condemnation of the luxury to which I had been accustomed. In short, I was disgusted with my entertainment; and, my heart being full, I burst into tears. 'What the devil ails thee now?' cried he, pretending to be amazed. I begged of him to permit me to retire, alleging, consistent with truth, that I was unwell. He then rang the bell, and dispatched the steward to call Ursley, who presently appeared, and was ordered to attend me to my chamber. 'I mean,' said he, 'the bedroom, which my cousin is to have to herself.' He then took me by the hand, telling me I might rely upon him. I thanked him for his promise, and withdrew.

"My guide conducted me through the great hall, where, mounting a noble flight of stairs which faced the entrance, we came to a long gallery, and passing by the doors of several other chambers, we came to mine, situated at the end, and apparently the largest of them all. I entreated the good dame to send the nurse to me. The moment she retired I gave indulgence to my anxiety: and my dear friend found me in a flood of tears, which greatly alarmed her. The moment I had sufficiently recovered myself, I made her acquainted with the nature of the conversation that had passed between the baron and myself. 'Ah, my good lady,' said she, 'I fear me, foul doings will be done. Might often overcomes right:—his worship is main fond of money; and, Gad's my life! I fear he means not fairly.' 'Let us not prejudge him, my dear nurse,' answered I; 'perhaps, as he says, the estates may be enthralled, and require time to set them clear; but what I chiefly mean to consult you upon is this—he speaks of my being dependent, and, by that word, I think he clearly means, a burthen upon him; and, in truth, so far as I can judge from what I have seen, my living under his roof will not be tolerable, especially for any length of time. A slender allowance will satisfy me; and if you would inquire me out of a proper situation in some religious house, I would make my asylum with the holy sisterhood. My cousin,' added I, 'will probably propose the same thing to me; but, perhaps, he will also be desirous of sending me where his influence may have more weight than is consistent with the freedom I wish to enjoy.' 'Heaven forefend,' exclaimed the nurse, holding up her hands, 'that I should stir myself in so naughty a cause!—By the holy mass-rood, I will not be the instrument to shut you up from

the world! Mercy forbid, that the daughter of my honoured Lady Darcy should be mured up in a cloister, like a fowl in a coop, and become a nun!' 'But, my good friend,' said I, 'you surely must know, that it is possible for me to reside in a cloister, and not take the veil.' 'Yes, yes,' cried she; 'I have heard others say the same; but when the gate is once shut against them, there is such wheedling, teasing, and enticing, that, I warrant, it is as easy for a bird caught in a trap to escape unhurt;—a piece of good that does not happen to one in a thousand.'

"The evening now drew on, and we were interrupted by the entrance of Ursley, who, I afterwards found, took upon herself the offices of house-keeper, cook, and chambermaid, in my cousin's family, and had under her a poor parish girl to do the drudgery of the house. This woman was rather tall than otherwise, exceedingly spare, and almost sixty years of age; her face was full of wrinkles; and her nose, crooked downwards like a hawk's bill, protuberated between two small ferret eyes, and nearly reached to her chin, which the loss of her teeth had brought to closer fellowship. Her wimple was wrapped closely about her head, and fastened by the gorget, which was wound round her neck in several small folds, and fastened with a bow in the front: her kirtle was of durance, patched in many places; and this she wore over a stammel-petticoat, without a surcoat or tunic.

"She came, by the baron's orders, to summon me to supper. My nurse was then preparing to take her leave; but I entreated her, with tears in my eyes, so earnestly to abide with me that night, that she yielded to my solicitations, and promised me she would not quit the house.

"I followed Dame Ursley to the refectory, where the supper was served with the same parsimony that had prevailed at dinner. I took the earliest opportunity to acquaint my cousin, that I had engaged the nurse to sleep with me that night, and hoped he would excuse my using so much liberty without acquainting him; a liberty which, I assured him, I should be cautious in exerting in future. He hesitated to answer, and, knitting his brows in silence, gave evident signs of displeasure; at last, however, he replied, 'Why, yes, for this night—but no more. Every thing is dear, and these kind of people have so little consideration;—and, on your part, I should have thought the daughter of Lady Darcy would have looked a step higher for a companion.' 'Sir,' said I, with some warmth, 'the mind that feels not the strength of an obligation, deserves not to be obliged. This excellent woman was my foster-mother; and her affection for me demands my warmest returns of gratitude.' 'Yes, yes, I see you are warm, my cousin,' retorted he, with a contemptuous grin: 'this excellent woman and you, whose acquaintance, you tell me, is but of a few hours old, are united in the close bonds of romantic friendship. Excellent mother, excellent daughter! who, discovering each other's virtues by intuition, can already sing each other's panegyric; and, well I wot, to the self-same tune also. By the shrine of St. Thomas, I suspect there is some plot in all this! but I will sift it to the bottom.' 'I beseech you, sir,' said I, 'do so; sift till you are tired.' 'Why, now, you are angry,' answered he; 'and anger, my cousin, becomes you not. Well, to please you, the old woman shall stay here this night; it is, however, an indulgence I will not have repeated.'

The times are hard ; the national levies are enormous ; and money is gone to the devil, or beyond sea. To-morrow we'll look over the accounts, as they stand between us ; and this we can do without the assistance of your excellent old woman : and so, my fair cousin, I wish you good-night.'

" So ended this unpleasant interview. I was, however, much rejoiced at having succeeded in my request, notwithstanding the baron's consent was given with so bad a grace. Blessed Virgin Lady ! I know not how I should have passed that night, had I been compelled to pass it by myself, shut into a chamber, removed from the rest of the family, at one end of a large and desolate mansion, where every casement was a wind-harp, and mourned when beat upon by the passing breezes. The few and miserable inhabitants of this ruin were strangers to me ; and the lord himself of this domain, at heart, mine enemy.

" But, to go on :—The nurse and I were conducted to the chamber, and Dame Ursley furnished us with an inch of candle, at the same time informing us, that his lordship did not permit the use of lamps, because the oil was so dear, and generally went to bed by daylight to render candles needless ; but this night, in compliment to me, he had passed his usual time.

" When the woman had withdrawn herself, I cast my eyes round the room, which, I think, I have already said was the largest that opened into the long gallery. There were six high windows in it, four on the side, and two at the end, but not one of them perfect ; some were altogether closed up with boards, others partly so ; and where the squares of glass were broken, the deficiency was supplied with bundles of rags, or wisps of hay. The hangings (that is, so much as remained of them) were of arras, and near the bed there stood a chair of state, overhung with the relics of a rich Venetian velvet cover. At a little distance there were two stools, without cushions ; and, opposite the bed, a large cabinet, decorated with carved work, the drawers of which were much broken, and one of the doors was altogether wanting. The bed itself bore the marks of former elegance ; the furniture consisted of a gleanings from the other sleeping-rooms wofully mismatched, no one part bearing any resemblance to the other, except in its raggedness. ' May holy St. Bridget have mercy upon me ! ' said the good nurse, raising the counterpane ; ' this is Joseph's coat of many colours, mentioned by Sir John, our curate, last Shrovetide ; and surely, by its appearance, it was his coat above an hundred years. My dear lady, the foul fiend has surely taken possession of this house, and Robin Goodfellow played at barley-break in this iniquitous counterpane.' I could not help smiling at these comical observations, and returned for answer, ' You, I doubt not, my dear nurse, remember well the time when the face of hospitality made this lone mansion cheerful.' ' I warrant me, I do,' cried she ; ' but it is some time back, my lady. Lack-a-day ! the great hall was then full of guests ; such mirth, such revelry ! —I remember me well, the very day after your ladyship was made a Christian, there were great doings here. It was, let me see, upon the nativity of the Blessed Virgin we came from Foleshunt Darcy hither ; there was feasting, and piping of minstrels, and juggling tricks, with dancing and mummeries. The horns strong English huffcap

were given away as though it had been water, and the cans of sack and claret, like wandering stars, were continually in motion ; and, after all, I warrant, a wine posset was presented to us before we went to our beds. Benedicite, how the times are altered ! Fie upon it, lady ! 'tis a naughty world, and continually changing.' ' We must submit ourselves, my dearest friend,' said I, ' to the decrees of Providence. While we are under His protection we have nothing to fear ; and He will not forsake us, if we call upon him faithfully ; ' so saying, I fell upon my knees, and made my evening orisons. She pulled out a rosary from her gipsire, and, counting over the beads with great devotion, joined with me in my supplications. She thought the bed was not so well aired as it ought to have been, and, for that reason, we only took off our upper garments, and laid ourselves upon it, for the weather was not cold. She cast, however, a blanket over me ; and, covering herself with the same, after some little conversation, she fell asleep.

" I now turned in my mind the singular strangeness of my situation. The title-deeds of my mother's jointure, which I had lost, occasioned me much uneasiness ; and then I thought upon that mysterious letter, written by my benefactor—so foreign from the truth, so contradictory to his professions of friendship, and so opposite to the real proofs of benevolence I had experienced from his hands, that I knew not what to think upon the subject. My reflections then led me to the mansion wherein I now resided. Its ruined state ; the squallid appearance of the furniture ; the protestations of poverty from the owner ; the miserable manner in which he lived ; partly inclined me to think, that some unfortunate circumstance had really involved my cousin in ruin, and I began to pity rather than condemn him ; and I resolved at no rate to become burthensome to him. ' But then,' said I, ' what must become of me, if my mother's jointure is also included in that ruin ! ' A thousand cogitations floated in my mind. I longed for the approach of morning ; and yet I dreaded the explanation I expected at the next interview with my cousin. I closed my eyes towards the morning ; but was soon after awakened by the first matin's bell at Beckenkake priory, which is situated in the neighbourhood."

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Emma's History continued—Her Distresses, and Flight from the Castle of Gaston.

" In less than an hour after my waking, my cousin, who is an early riser, sent Dame Ursley to inform me that breakfast was ready. I followed her instantly, and the baron seemed pleased at my diligence in preventing his waiting. Our repast consisted of a dish of pottage ; the want of meat, to make it palatable, was evident enough, though an attempt was made to supply the deficiency, by enlarging the quantity of garden herbs, and thickening it with oatmeal. This dainty fare was accompanied by a few stale simmels upon a platter. In dealing forth my portion, he harangued, as he had formerly done, upon the excellency of such food ; ' which,' said he, ' is not

only well adapted to our constitutions, by correcting of evil humours, and preventing of diseases, but it is also cheap, and proper for persons whose incomes are limited.'

"When the table was cleared, he removed to his writing-desk, (for we had breakfasted in the library,) and desired me to seat myself near him. After he had examined several parchments, he entered into conversation with me respecting the situation of my claims upon him. He prefaced his discourse with a lamentation upon the hardness of the times, which had put it out of his power to provide for me; in any respect, according to my rank; 'but,' added he, 'your own good sense will naturally suggest to you the necessity of humbling yourself; so far, at least, as to accommodate your mode of living to the compass of your means. Depending, therefore, upon the exertion of your own understanding, I shall not, I trust, have the least occasion to urge this part of the subject any farther.' He then proceeded to inform me, that some demur had been made relative to the payments of the rents upon the jointure, which could only be recovered by a process of law; and that it was absolutely necessary for him to produce the title-deeds, before he could proceed in due form in the courts of judicature; 'and these, unfortunately,' said he, 'if I understood you clearly yesterday, are now in Flanders.' I was, of course, reduced to the necessity of informing him, that they were not in Flanders, but had been destroyed by the flames at Billeracay. This intelligence affected him greatly; he waved his head in silence, and leaning it upon his right hand, which covered his eyes, sat several minutes absorbed in meditation. At last he looked up, and exclaimed at the same time, 'By the soul of St. Becket, I fear the case is desperate!—But,' added he, after a second pause, 'I will cast in my mind what can be done for you. I will support your cause, if it lie within the compass of possibility.' I was going to reply, but he prevented me, saying, 'Leave me alone; the law is against us. I must turn this matter over in my mind. I will send for you again presently, when I have formed my judgment upon the subject.'

"Agreeably to his request I arose from my seat, and retired to my chamber, where I expected to meet the nurse, for I had not taken my leave. Not finding her, I rang the bell, and upon inquiry, was told that she had been dismissed by the baron's positive order, and desired not to give herself the least farther concern respecting me, nor offer to repeat her visit to Gay Bowers. I was exceedingly mortified at hearing that the good dame had been dismissed with so much rudeness; I determined, however, to take an opportunity of seeing her again, and, if possible, establish some method of communication between us. I depended much upon her sincerity and affection, and made no doubt but through her means I should be able to procure some respectable situation, in which, at least, I might pass my time with less anxiety and irksomeness than seemed to await me at my cousin's.

"Dinner was served up this day at an earlier hour than usual. The baron was exceedingly thoughtful, and troubled me with very few comments upon the meanness or healthiness of the repast. The moment we had dined he caused the table to be cleared, and when I arose to quit the room, he desired me to be seated again. I obeyed,

and he, with much prolixity of speech, set forth many great things he had done for our family, many of them tending to his own detriment. That the regard he entertained for his father's sister had led him to advance large sums of money, most of which he had been necessitated to borrow, and at exorbitant interest. To repay these sums he found himself much straitened, and because it was not always in his power to keep time with his promises, the creditors had threatened to foreclose the mortgages, which, if carried into execution, would effect his ruin. For this reason it was impossible for him to support me with the least degree of splendour, and he well knew my spirit would not permit me to become burthensome to him. 'But what,' said I, hastily, 'am I to depend upon? To what limits may my expectancies be extended? and what steps are proper for me to pursue?' He shook his head, cast down his eyes, and with a stifled sigh replied, 'I am sorry to tell you, but necessity requires the truth at my hands—I am sorry, I say, to tell you that your dependencies are smaller than you seem in the least to be aware of. The law-suit, which is inevitable, will swallow up your expectancies, for the law is a devouring vortex, which draws into its insatiable maw every thing that comes within its reach. With respect to the last part of your question, I can see nothing more proper for you to do than to go to some distant part of England, where, changing your name, and concealing your rank, you may engage as an attendant upon the lady of some opulent nobleman.'

"Out upon the wretch!" cried the Lady Eleanor; "he is quite a barbarian."

Lady Darcy snuffed at the ejaculation, and continued the narrative.

"I was petrified with astonishment at hearing such an unexpected statement of my situation, and knew not how to frame my answer. He perceived my embarrassment, and added that the proposal he had made to me was grounded upon the supposition that the worst should happen; and if the law-suit, contrary to his expectation, took a favourable turn, I might, when the incumbrances were cleared from the estates, reassume my name, and be enabled to support my rank, if not with splendour, at least with credit. 'But as Jeau shall save me,' said he, 'this must be a work of time; and how is it you are to be clothed and fed while all these supposititious comforts are in agitation, unless my plan, or some one like it, be carried into execution, I cannot divine.' As soon as I could recollect myself sufficiently to answer him, I said 'It is no part of my design to be in any manner burthensome to you; and if necessity compels me to work for my own support, I shall with cheerfulness submit myself to my allotment; but I hope and I trust my exertions may be made for that purpose in a manner more delicate than that of positive servitude. I have in the early part of my life been taught to draw flowers and foliage for works of embroidery, and am in some degree a mistress of my needle. A diligent pursuit of these arts will furnish articles of ready sale, and provide, at least, means for my support with decency.' 'I shall be glad to find it so,' said he: 'for my own part I wish to see you settled in some permanent and proper situation.' At this instant the steward appeared, and announced to my cousin Mr. Reynard, who was waiting for him in the library. On hearing this he started up, saying,

'He is a man deeply learned in the law; I have sent for him upon your account.' But seeing that I was in tears he took me by the hand, telling me it was but folly and weakness to be weeping like a child, when reason told me the frowns of fortune were not to be avoided.

"When I quitted my cousin I hastened to my own apartment, and not having any one to whom I could communicate my sorrow, I sat down and wept. After I had dried up my tears, it came into my mind that the good nurse would in all probability wait some little time at Daubury in expectation of hearing from me; and although great part of the day was elapsed, I determined to walk out, and endeavour to find the inn whither the horses were sent upon our arrival at Gay Bowers; at least, thought I, a survey of the country, altogether new to me, and the fresh air, will be reviving to my spirits. Accordingly, I threw my surcoat over my super-tunic, and casting my veil across my arm, went down the lower court. When I came to the gate I found it fastened, and the steward approached, as I supposed, to open it; but on the contrary, he informed me that it was his lordship's strict command to prevent my egress thence. I made him no reply, but was much alarmed at finding myself a prisoner, and from this moment I began seriously to believe that the intention of Saint Clerc was to destroy me. I therefore returned to my chamber like one doomed to death, but uncertain when or how the sentence should be executed. Two or three hours afterwards the baron sent for me into the library, and upon my entering the room I was introduced to a little swarthy-faced man, exceedingly ill-favoured, with a large pair of glasses upon his nose. He had several parchments spread before him, and upon one of them he was then writing. 'This gentleman,' said my cousin, 'is a man eminently learned in the law. We have had a long consultation concerning your case, and he will read to you an accurate statement of the accounts between yourself and me, by which he will make it clear to you that I have been just to one farthing.' Here the lawyer, requesting me to pay attention to him, held up the parchment to the light, to which occasionally he referred, and pestered me with a long harangue, replete with technical terms of law, by which I was informed that he had examined the documents which his client had put into his hands, and thereby it appeared that the nett monies from time to time remitted beyond sea, amounted to one thousand four hundred and sixty-two pounds one shilling and sixpence three farthings more than per receipts had been produced from the estates, which additional monies client had raised by mortgages on the joisture,—said mortgages, with the interest thence arising, amounts to one thousand six hundred and ninety-eight pounds fourteens shillings and elevenpence farthing, which mortgages and interest client not being able to pay, the mortgagees had given notice, in proper form, the mortgages will be foreclosed on the eve of Saint Michael next ensuing, and the estates seized. Client, therefore, was compelled to hold the said joisture to sale, or engage in a suit of law, which, from the want of title-deeds, he could not justify. The said estates, therefore, being fairly valued, were found to be worth one thousand seven hundred and forty-nine pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence halfpenny, from which the said mortgage monies and interest being duly

deducted, there would remain a nett sum of fifty pounds eighteen shillings and fivepence farthing due to legal heir to said estates.

"I could hardly contain myself at hearing this infamous statement; however, I held my peace, for I well knew the estates could not be legally sold without my concurrence, which I supposed it was the design of this confederacy to obtain, and my worthy relation presently convinced me that my conjectures were founded on the truth. 'You see now, my dear cousin,' said he, taking me by the hand, 'the justness of my former observations. This candid examination of the accounts between us must convince you how much you are a sufferer through the extravagance of your family. The estates are, as you are told, incumbered past redemption, and nothing but the sale of them can secure to you the slender pittance which remains your due. On my part, it is impossible for me to supply you with one cross more—the monies I have borrowed must be paid,—but I have no such monies to pay; we are, therefore, compelled to sell. Well, then, this gentleman,' pointing to the lawyer, 'who is an honest and responsible man, has provided a purchaser for us at the valuation specified.' I remained silent, and he went on—"you must,—let me tell you, the offer is not to be refused. The estates are in a disordered condition, the tenements upon them are out of repair, the fences are broken down, and the land worn out for want of manure. In fact, the bidder is a young ignorant springal, just come to the possession of much wealth, and has got more money than sagacity, but that is not our inquiry. Now I have caused Mr. Reynard to draw up an instrument, which you must sign, which will enable me to dispose of the said estates without producing the title-deeds, and I, without making any charge for my own trouble, or for the business done by this gentleman, will pay you the sum of fifty pounds eighteen shillings and fivepence farthing, which in times like these, while money is so scarce, will be a little fortune. You tell me you possess abilities to follow the profession of pattern-making and embroidering; go to, then—this sum will enable you to set forward with credit, and establish you on a footing superior to most of your competitors.' I could hear no more, but, instead of answering him, burst into tears, and rising hastily, I quitted the room, and retired to my own apartment, where I gave full scope to my sorrows, and cast myself upon the bed in an agony better to be conceived than described.

"In the evening, Urseley called me to supper; but I excused my attendance, and assured her I found myself so seriously ill, that it was necessary for me to go to my bed. The good dame expressed her sorrow for my indisposition, and offered her assistance. I thanked her, and told her that rest was what I most wanted. She retired, but soon returned to inform me, that the baron was hugely angry at my refusal, and declared I should repeat the giving-myself such airs. On her own part, she advised me to pacify his fury, by complying with his request; but I persisted in my resolution, and began to prepare myself for the night, when, seeing me so inflexible, she shook her head and departed. I fastened the door, and passed the night in severe affliction; my spirits were wofully dejected by the apprehensions I had entertained in my mind concerning

my personal safety, and every moment I expected to see a ruffian bursting into my apartment, and pointing his rapier to my bosom. The night, however, passed over, and I experienced no other disturbance than what arose from my own imagination; the morning sun illuminated my chamber, and dispersed much of the melancholy gloom which had depressed my mind. I blamed myself for indulging such unworthy suspicions on the part of my cousin, and determined, though I was exceedingly unwell, to get myself ready at an early hour, and attend him the moment he called for me. When we met, he reproached me with haughtiness and ingratitude. I assured him, that my refusal to attend him proceeded from my indisposition. 'I am willing,' said he, 'to believe it; but the best proof that you can give of your respect for me is to put an end to this useless altercation, and sign the deed.' 'I will not deceive you, my cousin,' answered I; 'nor tell you falsely that I respect you more than I do justice. This proposal is not only unjust, but it is withal so contrary to reason, that I cannot, nay, I dare not acquiesce.' He received this reply with more patience than I expected, and, instead of ordering me from the room, ran into a long tract of arguments to counteract my objections; most of them were absolutely contradictory with each other, and all of them so inconclusive, that a person less skilled than myself in debate must have discovered their flimsiness. Perceiving, at length, that his sophistical reasonings had not the power to convince me, he lost his temper, and, changing his mode of address, descended to the use of scurilous invectives, upon which I withdrew. Nearly a fortnight elapsed without any material change in my situation at Gay Bowers. Every day I was pestered over and over again with fallacious arguments, tauntings, scoldings, and threatenings, to induce me to sign the parchment; and I constantly rejected the proposal, without respecting the form in which it was exhibited. Our meetings continually ended in bickerments, and tears and fearful apprehensions were the companions of my solitude.

"In the mean time, I became more familiar with Dame Ursley, and found her to be a plain, simple woman, unadorned indeed, but her heart was sincere and compassionate. She was well acquainted with the impetuosity of her master's temper; and, not knowing the nature of the requisition, frequently pressed me, with tears in her eyes, to appease his anger by submission. She related to me a variety of circumstances, which evinced the cruelty of his disposition when opposed; and one in particular, which I shall relate, to the best of my memory, in her own words: 'By'r Lady, I one day weened he would have quelled old Gaunt the reve; and wot ye well why? the seely hylding medeld with the hosteler's business, and 'plained to Lord Eustace, that his favourite nag was doon to die for the lack of corn, and all for the hest of the imp his son. What does me the lordling, then not passing thrice five years? marry, he drew out his gilt dagger, and cast it incontinently at the reve's sconce; and had not the baron, his father, arraught his arm, he would have foined the carving thwittle through his heart.' 'Was he so outrageous,' said I, 'in his father's lifetime?' 'Gad's my life,' answered the dame, 'I were a dead woman if he were told of what I now areed thee!' I assured her she

might depend upon my secrecy: and she went on to inform me that he held the mastery at Gay Bowers for several years previous to the decease of Lord Eustace, who, it seems, was confined to his chamber, and knew but little of what was passing below, where the servants were discharged, —the wonted good cheer abolished, —the visitants affronted, and the mansion nearly forsaken. In the mean time no repairs were done —the furniture was suffered to fall to decay for want of care; 'and, mercy oa us!' continued Ursley, 'in a year or twain more his lordship, I trow, will be buried in the ruins of his own dwelling.'

"Curiosity led me one day to visit the chapel belonging to this extensive edifice, for I think I before observed that Gaston kept no chaplain to bless his food, or perform the morning and evening services. Upon my entering the consecrated dome, where, apparently, no human beings had for some time presented themselves, I found every thing in the rudest disorder: the door was unhinged, the windows broken, the floor was covered with filth; part of the holy rood was fallen to the ground, and the birds made a roost of the mutilated remnant; the altar was overthrown, its ornaments destroyed, and upon its ruins lay the great missal, mouldering away with the damps which fell upon it; the copes, the albs, the stoles, and other decorative vestments for the use of the priests and choristers, were sacrilegiously taken from their places, and only a tattered surplice or two of no value left behind. I bent my knee upon the altar steps, and, crossing myself, devoutly deprecated the vengeance of God from falling upon the head of that unhappy man, who had suffered this noble edifice to be so vilely polluted; and then retired to my chamber.

"One morning, some time afterwards, when my cousin and I were sitting at breakfast, he was particularly pressing for me to sign the deed, and I as positively refused to comply. After much altercation, he flew into a violent passion, and, catching up a salver from the table, I verily thought he would have thrown it at me. I remembered what Ursley told me, and trembled for the event; but upon recollecting himself, he cast it down disdainfully, saying, 'By the blood of Saint Thomas, I will be revenged! The estates shall be sold, the mortgages shall be paid, and I will thrust thee forth into the wide world, without one single cross to help thyself; or shut thee up in a prison as an impostor—as a vile counterfeit giglet, and practiser of charms and sorceries.' To these incivilities I made no answer, and was preparing to quit the room, when he rose from his chair, and, placing himself before the door, swore by his Redeemer, that I should not depart until I had signed the deed. 'Take then my life at once, insatiate Gaston,' said I, 'and add the crime of murder to the abuses you have already heaped upon me!' Here he clapped his hand upon his dagger hilt. 'Spare not,' continued I, 'courageous cousin, spare not a weak, defenceless woman, thy father's sister's orphan! for rest assured, that I will sooner permit thee to bury thy dagger in my bosom, than set my hand to that vile parchment, or sanction thy villanies by my assentment.' The exertions I had made in this interview were beyond my strength; and at the end of these last altercations, I sunk down in my chair, and nearly swooned. He saw my disorder, and withdrawing himself a little from me, he walked hastily backwards and forwards in the room, swear-

ing great oaths, and devoting vengeance with horrible imprecations. Before I was sufficiently recovered to renew the conversation, his servant entered, and delivered a letter to him, which he opened immediately, and upon reading the same, was still more violently agitated than before; he stamped and raved to such a degree, that I actually thought he was deprived of his senses. He read it a second time, and then striking his right hand sharply upon his forehead, he exclaimed, 'I am born to be unfortunate—to be cheated! Here again my fair hopes are frost-bitten in the blossom;—the powers of earth and hell are surely united against me!' He then threw down the letter, and after a short pause, casting his eyes upon the parchment deed, which had occasioned so much altercation between us, he caught it in a fury, and having scored it several times across with the writing knife, he tore it in pieces, and throwing it with great indignation upon the floor, he stamped upon it, raving and foaming at the mouth like a baited bear; when turning with a contemptuous air to me, he extended both his arms, as though he would thrust me away, and cried, 'Out of my sight, impostor—sorceress! that letter—curse on the sender!—beggar thee; it sets aside thy claim, and ends our controversy. Begone, I say!' continued he, throwing back the door with much fury; 'begone, and let me see you no more!' To argue with a madman, (for such he appeared to be,) in the paroxysm of his passion, I thought was useless, and might be dangerous: I therefore hastily obeyed his commands, and making the best of my way to my chamber, I fastened the door, and held myself secure for the present.

"The more I reflected upon the conduct of the baron, so incompatible with reason, the more I was at a loss to account for it; the reading of the deed, which a few minutes before he had been so anxious for me to ratify; the expressions he made use of upon the occasion, and the declaration that my claim to the jointure was set aside by the letter he had received, were incomprehensible mysteries. 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'Saint Clerc has really lost his senses, or he is meditating some new plot to entrap me by artifice.' And therefore I determined to proceed with caution; for I was well assured it was no part of his design to do me justice.

"While I was occupied with these cogitations, Ursley rapped at my door: I opened it to her, when she appeared with tears in her eyes, saying, 'What have you done, lady, to my master? The baron, I wot me well, is as wode as crazy Wallis, the weaver.' She told me, that he swore I had imposed upon him, and made such vows of vengeance, that her hair stood on end to hear him. She then proposed, of her own accord, to excuse my going down to dinner, because she thought it might be dangerous for me to appear before him while he remained unpacified. I readily acquiesced; for I had previously resolved, upon no account, to see Saint Clerc any more that day. The good dame brought me to my chamber a small piece of veal, with a dish of white broth, and a simmel of wheaten bread: to oblige her, I took a few mouthfuls; but in truth I was but little inclined to eat. Ursley was more cheerful than before, and informed me, that the baron had inquired after me, and expressed some compassion for my indisposition, and was in a much better humour than he had been. I told her I felt myself exceedingly unwell, and requested her to excuse me again on that account, if my cousin should desire to see me at supper. 'I am,' said I, 'very low and faint for want of sleep, and shall therefore retire to my bed at an early hour.'

She assented, and withdrew. At the close of the evening, I fastened my door, undressed, and laid myself down to rest at the time the complestory was rung at the neighbouring priory.

"The inconsistent behaviour of Saint Clerc filled my mind with new apprehensions for my safety; and the gloom of the night added strength to the powers of imagination, and rendered my melancholy situation doubly irksome. I was weary for want of rest, yet I could not hastily close my eyes in sleep; and when perchance I did so, the dreams of the night were little other than uncouth continuations of my waking visions, full of terrific images and baleful forebodings of disastrous events. I heard, or thought I heard, the priory bell tolling at midnight; and sometime afterwards I was aroused from my sleep by an unusual noise in my chamber. The moment I opened my eyes I saw a great light, which alarmed me prodigiously, and recalled to my mind the calamitous accident of Billeracay. I started up instantly, and throwing the curtains aside, beheld a ghastly spectre standing at the foot of the bed. It bore the appearance of a tall human figure, wrapped in a winding-sheet; its countenance, the only part I saw uncovered, was that of a skeleton; the jaws were fleshless, and the eyes corroded from their sockets. The light I had observed proceeded from a large lamp borne by this goblin, but in such a manner that the hand and arm which supported it was not visible. I fell back upon my pillow affrighted, and uttering a loud shriek, drew up the counterpane over my face. Some time passed before I dared to look out again; I then perceived that the apparition moved, and was approaching by slow degrees. I repeated my evening prayers, and recommended myself to the protection of God and the blessed Virgin. It came yet nearer to me; when, taking courage, I thus addressed myself to it: 'In the name of that blessed Lord who suffered upon the holy rood for the redemption of sinners, what art thou, and wherefore art thou come?' It stopped, adewed by the adjuration, and a hollow voice replied, 'I am thy friend;—be warned by me, and fly this place, for evil awaits thee here.' This said, before I could frame an answer, the spectre retreated a step or two, when the light was suddenly extinguished. I heard a rumbling sound, somewhat resembling distant thunder, succeeded by a crashing noise, like the thrusting back of a heavy shutter; after which all was quiet. Recovering from fright, so soon as I was able to reflect coolly upon this extraordinary visitation, I began to suspect that the whole of it was a contrivance of my cousin's. I had narrowly watched the figure while the voice was uttered, and perceived that the jaws were motionless, neither did the articulation appear to proceed from the mouth, and its movements, in approaching and receding from me, were exceedingly awkward, and inconsistent with nature; besides, the friendly admonition it pretended to give me was altogether useless, without the information by what means my escape might be effected. I waited impatiently for the morning, when I scrutinised my chamber most minutely, and, to my great surprise, I found every thing precisely in the same state I had left them, and the door was bolted on the inside. I examined the hangings, but found no recess sufficient for a hiding-place, nor the least appearance of their having been disturbed; the casements, which were high up in the room, were fastened within, and a closet door at the foot of the bed was secured by a bar, which I had put up before I went to bed. In short, I began to doubt the

evidence of my own senses, and question the reality of the apparition; which, however, if it was no more than a dream, was the most wonderful one I ever experienced.

" Ursley came to my door at least an hour sooner than usual; I instantly admitted her, but did not think proper to communicate to her at that time what I had seen. Upon my inquiring what had occasioned so early a visit, she shook her head, and, entering the room, sat down upon the side of the bed, and began to sob and wring her hands, like one in deep affliction. I was much affected at seeing her in this condition, and anxiously entreated her to acquaint me with the cause. She assured me that her fears and her sorrows were all upon my account; for she verily believed that it was the intention of the baron to cause me to be murdered. Seeing me turn pale and tremble upon receiving this information, she advised me not to let my presence of mind forsake me, because my safety would probably depend in a great measure upon my courage. She then proceeded to tell me, he was at that moment shut up in the library with two ruffians, noted for their villainies. That she had listened at the door, (for they had been two hours in conversation,) and heard my name mentioned several times. She advised me to go down and take a turn or two in the great court, as I had sometimes done before, for the sake of the air, and it was probable I might see them pass. ' You will easily know them,' said she, ' by their ill-favouredness.'

" I approved of her proposal; and, throwing my veil over my head, descended into the hall, where I soon afterwards saw the two ruffians coming from the library, and followed Saint Clare, who was engaged with them in earnest conversation. They were both of them sturdy knaves, clad in thick jerkins of leather, girt with thengs. For reverence sake, they carried their thrum-caps in their hands, which exposed their bare heads and faces, overgrown with hair, not often troubled with a comb, and begrimed with filth. They had each of them a large knotted club of wood and a small shield hanging upon the left shoulder; but he whom I took to be the chief, had also a long rusty sword, without a sheath, depending from a baldric of leather, with a dagger and a butcher's thwittle stuck in his girdle. To this man I distinctly heard the baron say these words—' Remember to make all sure.' He was going to answer, when, turning his head suddenly, he saw me within hearing, and holding his forefinger to his lips, bowed in token of assent, and with his comrade withdrew.

" ' Are you come?' said Saint Clare, somewhat confused; ' I did not expect to find you here at this early hour. But it is well;—go with me into the library.' So saying, he took my hand and led me to a seat. When leaning upon his writing-desk, he made an awkward apology for the harsh language he had used the day before. He declared that he had received letters from the Lord High Chancellor's office, establishing a claim to my mother's jointure upon the part of the crown, and an order for the sequestration of the estates, and payment into the Court of Chancery of the monies arising from them, for nearly twenty years back. ' These monies,' continued he, ' with large surpluses, have been remitted to your family, and what am I to do in this case? Pay the monies I cannot; and if I resist, I involve myself in ruin by a tedious Chancery suit.' He paused. On my part, I did not believe one syllable of all he had uttered. The story was altogether incongruous with common reason; and I really

knew not how to answer him. He saved me the trouble, and went on—' I see you are astonished at these extraordinary proceedings; and so, in truth, was I, until I received this letter from a friend of mine at London, in the afternoon of yesterday.' So saying, he put into my hands a letter, addressed to himself; the contents of which were to the following purport:—

" DEAR SAINT CLARE,

" I remember you told me, when I was at Gay Bowers about two months back, that your cousin, the young Lady Darcy, was deceased in Flanders. Judge then how much I was surprised at finding a young woman in town, professing herself to be the daughter and sole heiress of John Lord Darcy and Anna St. Clare. Her claim is vigorously supported by the Baron B———, your avowed enemy, who has, in her name, instituted a suit in the Court of Chancery against you for the recovery of the Darcy estates. You well know that nothing can be done in this court without the advance of prodigious sums of money; but on the other hand you are equally certain that money has an irresistible power. The baron is liberal of his purse, and you know he is immensely rich. The advocates are feed'd to their heart's desire; and I fear, if it be not hastily prevented, a sequestration will be granted. I have therefore taken the earliest opportunity to give you this information. Yours," &c.

" To this epistle was subscribed a name totally unknown to me, and which I do not remember. At the bottom was added, ' I have seen the young woman—she is neither handsome nor well nurtured; but no doubt her patron has tutored her for his purposes.'

" As soon as I had finished reading the letter St. Clare resumed his speech in this manner—' You see, my dear cousin, by that letter my meaning yesterday, when I mentioned another claimant to the jointure estates. For my own part I am satisfied you are the real heir, and of course your title must be substantiated to obviate the other's claim; and herein we have to lament the loss of those important parchments you brought from Flanders with you. Your appearance will be indispensably necessary as a witness when the time is ripe to bring you forward, and will be the only means left us to defeat our rival; and if I must be ruined (as, God shall judge me, seems inevitable either way) I had better suffer for a relative than for a stranger, an impostor. But as your appearance in England is of so recent a date, if you continue under my roof, the chancellor may suspect you also of being a deceiver in collusion with me, and brought forward to answer my own purposes. I have therefore carefully turned this matter in my mind, and will to-morrow, if it please you, send you, under the conduct of two of my tenants, to the dwelling of my steward's sister upon the forest, near High Ongar, where you may live at ease, your own mistress, and I from time to time will send you word concerning the progress of the law-suit. Consider this proposal well, and when we meet again at dinner I shall be glad to hear your determination.' He then rose from his seat, and quitted the room. I followed, and going to my chamber, scrutinised it a second time, in order, if possible, to account for the appearance of the goblin upon natural principles; but in vain. I then attempted to investigate the motives of my cousin's mysterious conduct, but without being able to afford myself the least satisfaction. My situation on all sides wore a most gloomy aspect—my destruction seemed to be inevitable; I could not realise any solid hope for escape, and the more I pos-

dotted upon it the more my imagination was bewil-
dered.

"At this moment came Ursley. I told her the baron and myself were better reconciled to each other than we had formerly been, and that he had proposed my removal from Gay Bowers to the dwelling of the reeve's sister upon the forest near Ongar, and that I was to be conducted thither by two of his tenants. Upon which the faithful creature burst into tears, and said to this effect—' My dearest lady, the baron's smiles are more to be feared than his frowns. Benedicite! I warrant you he meditates your death. God forbid that I should lie unto you. Old Gaunt has no such sister near Ongar; and holy Mary so save me! the two tenants he speaks of are none other than the two cut-throat scoundrels you saw just now; and in the forest, instead of a house, I fear me, lady, you will find your grave.' 'But, my good friend,' cried I, grasping her hand, 'if St. Clere be resolved upon my destruction, how am I to avoid it? Should I refuse to quit this mansion, may he not employ those wicked ministers of blood to murder me here. Tell me, I beseech you, if you know what course I can pursue.' 'I have thought of it,' said the good dame, 'leave the matter to me. But when you appear before the baron pretend to acquiesce with his proposal. Keep him in the humour you find him at present—to irritate him may be dangerous. I will see you again soon after dinner, but must quit you now; it is not proper we should be seen consulting together. I will, if possible, effect your escape, and save your life at the hazard of my own.' This spontaneous flow of affection, from one who was so little interested in my success, made a strong impression upon my mind; and I rejoiced in having obtained the friendship of so excellent a woman. I could not indeed divine by what means she intended to provide for my safety, or conquer the fears to which my reflections gave birth. I embraced the shadow, as it were, of hope, and resolved to comply with the admonitions of my good friend.

"At dinner St. Clere was in a better humour than I had hitherto seen him; and when I declared myself willing to comply with his request, he was exceedingly pleased, and assured me I should not want a protector while he breathed.

"On my return to my apartment, I found Ursley waiting for me. ' Shut the door, my dear lady,' said she; ' and hark, in your ear, I have provided the means for your escape.' ' As how, my dear friend?' said I, hastily. ' Why, you must know,' replied she, ' at the lower part of the garden, the wind has blown down a portion of the wall into the moat, and nearly filled it up; so that, with the assistance of a few planks, which I have procured, being laid across, you may easily pass over; and close by the side of the breach is the path which leads directly to Danbury town.' ' But how shall I get into the garden, my dear Ursley?' said I. ' When the doors of the house are locked,' replied she, ' and the keys carried to the baron.' She then drew forth a key from her pouch, saying, ' This key belongs to a small postern which leads to the garden, and through the same I will conduct thee thither.' To this I replied, ' But will not my escape, thus made, subject you to the anger of the baron. He certainly will conclude that it could not have been done without your assistance. Such a suspicion may be fatal to you; and, my dear friend, though life and liberty are desirable objects, they will be too dearly purchased at such a price. I should never be happy in future, if your days are to be shortened to lengthen mine. ' Have no such

fear, my dear lady,' answered the faithful dame, ' I have provided a remedy for this evil also. The moment I have seen you safely set forward from this mansion, I will tie the sheets of your bed together, and fastening them to the bar of one of the casements, let them hang down to the ground. If possible, I will suffer the alarm to come from some one else, and it will be readily believed that you have effected your own escape.' I expressed my gratitude to her in the warmest terms; but, at the same time, I was myself ashamed to have recourse to such mean subterfuges, and nothing short of the apprehensions of a premature and cruel death could have forced me to comply with them.

"At supper St. Clere and I met for the last time. He requested me to prepare myself for the journey in the fore part of the day, because he had some matters of importance to communicate to me; and in order that I might not be late upon the road, he had ordered dinner to be provided at an early hour, immediately after which he thought it proper for me to be gone. ' I will not,' continued he, ' send you away without something to ensure your welcome whither you are going. Take this purse;—at the same time putting one into my hands—' it contains the sum of twenty angels in gold, which, I trust, you will use with discretion, for, as Christ shall judge me, I borrowed them with much difficulty;—and this is all I can do for you at present; for the times are hard, the subsidies enormous, and this law-suit, I fear, will ruin us both.' He then changed the discourse, and advised me, at all events, to improve my talents in drawing and needle-work, promising to lend me all the assistance that lay in his power; so that, had I not been convinced of his vile duplicity, I should have thought his heart had been softened by the sensations of humanity. Nay more—he took me by the hand, when he bade me good night, and pressed it to his lips; a gallantry he had not heretofore been guilty of, and which I could have readily dispensed with at that time.

"When Ursley attended with my light, I begged of her to come to me again as soon as possible, because I was fearful of being alone, owing to some uncommon disturbance which broke my rest the preceding night. To this she replied, with a smile, ' Truly, my lady, we often hear strange noises and voices in this deserted mansion. Old Gaunt says, that spirits walk in the chambers; but, in sooth, I never saw them.'

"After she was gone, I sat down and wept. What was to become of me I knew not; nor whither to fly for safety. I had not sufficient money to carry me back to Flanders. I had no friend to whom I could make any application, excepting my nurse at Baddow, and to her I determined to make the best of my way. I then threw myself upon my knees, and pouring out my heart before my Maker, committed myself to his guidance, and made my orisons to the blessed Virgin, and the saints in heaven.

"It was midnight before Ursley returned, and I was fearful that some accident had occasioned her delay. She brought with her a lantern; and, with a smile, assured me that all was secured. I showed her the purse with the money which my cousin had given me, and pressed her to take a part of it for her trouble. She peremptorily refused, saying, with tears in her eyes, ' Holy Jesu forbid I should touch the price of innocent blood! for well I ween, my dear lady, that money was indeed intended for the villains who were to kill you. Poor dear lamb! you were appointed to be the bearer of the meed for your own murder.' Her words chilled

my blood ; I trembled, and the purse with the gold fell from my hand. 'Is it possible?' cried I. 'May Heaven forgive him!' 'Speak lower, for our blessed Lady's sake!' said the good dame; 'consider the jeopardy in which we stand. An alarm at this moment would discover all our plan, and hazard the death of both.' She took up the purse, which lay upon the floor, and thrusting it into my gipsaire, added, with a whisper, 'The gold is innocent, and requisite withal.' The few things I had to take with me were comprised in a short compass, and formed a parcel by no means cumbersome; I was therefore very soon prepared for my departure. Ursley put the light into the lantern, and we descended cautiously, passing through the great hall, and along a dark narrow passage to the postern, which she unlocked, and we entered the garden; and, without meeting with any interruption, we proceeded to that part of it where the wall was broken down. In passing over the planks, either through my negligence, or one of them not being securely placed, I lost my foothold, and had not Ursley supported me, at the hazard of her own safety, I should inevitably have fallen into the water. Having escaped the danger, my faithful conductress put me into the path leading to Danbury town, through which it was necessary for me to pass in my way to Great Baddow, whither I intended to direct my steps, and use every exertion in order to reach that place before my flight should be discovered at Gay Bowers. I embraced my dear friend Ursley with much affection, and the good dame bade me farewell, commanding me to the care of God and the blessed Virgin Mary.

"The night was clear, and the stars shone brightly; but, as I was a stranger to the place, and was exceedingly fearful of mistaking the road, I proceeded with caution, which somewhat retarded my progress; however, at the break of day, I found myself in the midst of Danbury town, and near to the church, but not a soul was stirring excepting a person who opened the door of an inn, and from his dress I took him to be the master. He seemed surprised at seeing a person of my sex and appearance there so early in the morning; and I being fearful he might interrupt me with some impertinent questions, hastened by him; and he, on his part, permitted me to pass without saying a syllable to me. I soon afterwards came to an open green, with some tall elms upon the midst of it, and finding here two roads, I was at a loss which of them to take; and here I determined to wait a little space, in hopes that some one might pass who could direct me. I sat down upon a bench erected at the bottom of one of the trees, and casting my eyes over the prospect which lay before me, saw a large town, which appeared to be at no great distance. I cast my eyes presently behind me, and wished myself at that great town.

"At this moment a young rustic approached, carrying a wallet at his back, supported by a long staff upon his shoulder. He informed me, that the town I saw was five miles distance, and called Chelmsford. I then inquired for Baddow. 'Great Baddow I suppose you mean,' said the lad; 'it lies in your way to Chelmsford; you may see the spire of the church between the trees of yonder coppice.' 'But which of these two roads?' said I, 'will lead me thither.' 'That,' quoth he, 'which lies straight before; this, on the left, leads you to Grays. But the nearest footpath to Baddow is through the park belonging to Danbury Place, on the left hand.' At the same time he told me, there were many deer in the park, which perhaps might frighten me, but added, that he was himself going that way to Han-

ingfield, and would prevent them from hurting me. He seemed to be a simple, honest lad, and I made no hesitation of placing myself under his protection. We passed the park without the least interruption. I saw it was true that the deer were in great numbers, but they were at a distance from us. When we regained the main road, my guide directed me to the right, he turning to the left. I gave him a small piece of silver for his civility, with which he was well satisfied; and bidding me good-morrow, went forward singing, as merrily as a lark.

"I now made the most of my time, and hurried on, not indeed without frequently looking behind me, expecting every minute to see my pursuers following my footsteps. I reached Baddow soon after sunrise, where, inquiring out the habitation of the nurse, I had the mortification to find it close shut up, and was informed by the neighbours, that she and her husband had been sent for to Hertford, by a special message the day before, to attend his sister, who lived near that town, and was dangerously ill, so that the time of their return was altogether uncertain.

"This unexpected disappointment plunged me into a terrible dilemma. I knew not what steps to take, and the exigence of the moment required an immediate decision. It was impossible for me to remain where I was in safety. I knew not one soul in the hamlet, and of course had no claim to protection from the outrages of my pursuers, who might readily discover where I had taken refuge. The first thought that occurred suggested the propriety of going instantly to Billericay; but a minute's reflection set that determination aside, 'for thither,' said I to myself, 'the ruffians will naturally follow me; and supposing that I might perchance escape their malice, through the interposition of my generous benefactress, her benevolence would certainly ensure her ruin, for Gaston de Saint Cler is an implacable enemy.' I then turned my thoughts towards Chelmsford; and finding the distance to that town did not much exceed a mile, I determined, at all events, to walk thither without delay; for I saw, or thought I saw, the good people who had answered my inquiries pierced my embarrassment, and was fearful they might probably draw some unfavourable conclusions from it. I therefore bade them good-morrow, and went forward.

"I was somewhat alarmed, soon after quitting Baddow, by seeing the same young man who had conducted me through Danbury Park cross the road before me. He touched his bonnet as he passed, and, without saying a word, struck into a meadow on the right hand, and went singing towards a mill which stands upon the river at no great distance. I began to fear the lad was employed to watch me; but the simplicity of his appearance soon checked that thought, and I blamed myself for suspecting him.

"This circumstance, trifling as it may appear, made me resolve to quit that part of the country, and follow my nurse to Hertford, where I had some hope to meet with her, or at least I conceived I should be more secure from the inquiries of Saint Cler.

"On my arrival at Chelmsford, I went to one of the principal inns, distinguished by the sign of the Saracen, or Man Quintain, where I took some slight refreshment, and inquired the ready way to Hertford, and was told I could not do better than go through Dunmow or Stortford. I instantly ordered horses and a guide, being determined to get as forward on my journey as I could that day. We left Chelmsford about nine o'clock, and my guide took me through Waltham to Braintree. This road, he in-

formed me, was somewhat more about than another he could have taken me, but, at the same time, was so much better, that the additional distance was not worth consideration. We took some dinner at the Bugle-horn at Braintree, and proceeded, in the afternoon, to Dunmow, where we arrived before sunset; but I had ridden upwards of twenty miles. I was too much fatigued to go any farther that evening, and bespoke a bed at the inn to which my guide conducted me, which seemed to be the best in the town.

"Upon my entering Dunmow, a very young man passed by me, nearly resembling the lad I have before mentioned, but he was dressed in a riding coat, girt with a broad belt of leather. The difference of his dress, and the distance from Danbury, convinced me that it was another person; and yet I could not help being somewhat disquieted at seeing him. I resolved to pursue my journey early the next day, and accordingly, having provided fresh horses and another guide, we set forward, at the time the first matin bell was rung, and after passing over the common, by the side of Takeley-wood, we found the road exceedingly bad, which occasioned so much delay, that we did not reach Bishop's Stortford before noon, and here I dined. I cannot help observing, that, upon reaching the inn door, I saw the same young man, with his riding coat and broad belt, who had passed me at Dunmow, standing there; he looked earnestly at me as I descended from my horse, but not as one who had seen me before. On examining his person and features, he so strongly resembled my Danbury guide, that I was almost tempted to speak to him, but I forbore. I found myself too much fatigued to proceed any farther on horseback, and being determined to reach Hertford that night, I hired a calash, and gave the driver a piece of silver to make the more haste.

"When I came to the entrance of the town of Ware, I was again surprised by the appearance of the young man whom I had seen at Dunmow and Stortford. He was now on horseback, and riding hastily by the calash, turned up a road to the right, which I since learned leads to Walton. 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'this is some goblin, and not a man, who haunts me for some evil purpose.' But after that time I saw him no more, and the subsequent events effaced from my mind the evil apprehensions his appearance had made, and indeed I know not to what purpose I have mentioned this trifling circumstance in the present narrative.

"When we reached Hertford, I depended entirely upon my guide for the selection of the inn where I was to take up my temporary residence. I begged of him to conduct me to such a one as would afford me proper accommodation, and where I might be certain of meeting with civility. He assured me that there was not a better house in the town than the Crescent, in the High-street. Thither we went, and having entered the inn yard, I saw, to my inexpressible satisfaction, my nurse herself talking with the innkeeper. The noise our horses made occasioned them to look round. The good dame, who instantly recognised me, was greatly surprised at seeing me there; she sprang to the calash, and, assisting me to descend, caught me in her arms, and pressed me to her bosom with a ~~soft~~ warmth of affection, that had I been her own child she could not have manifested more tenderness; when a moment afterwards, seeming to recollect herself, she excused the freedom she had taken. I repeated the embrace, and, grasping her hand, assured her I

delighted to meet with her there; 'for, in truth,' added I, 'it was you alone I came hither to find.' She called for the hostess, and caused us to be shown to a room, where we might be by ourselves without any interruption, and scarcely was I seated before she expressed her anxiety to know by what means I had escaped from Gay Bowers, and traced her to Hertford. I related to her, as briefly as possible, the principal incidents that had occurred to me, from the time we parted at the baron's to the present meeting. She heard me with great attention, but not without uttering many ejaculations to the holy saints. The story of the spectre particularly attracted her notice: she has great faith in preternatural appearances, and believed it to be in reality a goblin; and the admonition, the warning voice of my good angel. When I had concluded my narrative, she shook, and said, 'Holy Mother of God, there is some rank knavery abroad! Wot ye well, my dear young lady, had you not arrived this evening, I and my husband should have been away with the lark in the morning: and, would you believe it, we came upon a fool's errand,—my sister is in perfect health; she sent no messenger, but was herself aghast at seeing us in so much hurry and confusion. Gads my life, we have been tricked; but who the traitor is, or wherefore he should have beset us so foully, I can't aeed.' I readily answered, 'This deception, my dear nurse, is certainly one of those contrivances I may justly add to the enmity of my barbarous cousin. God forgive me if I prejudge him; but I fear it was done with the view of depriving me of your protection, in case I escaped from the hands of the murderers. He will find me,' added I, 'even here. He will trace me from inn to inn, where I took horses. I must seek an asylum: I need protection from some one powerful enough to vindicate the cause of injured innocence, and compassionate enough to do it for justice sake alone.' 'By'r Lady,' said she, grasping my hand, 'I beseech you be not adawed; it shall go hard with me if I do not let the naughty baron in his seekings—leave it to me; my husband and I will take you to a place of safety to-morrow, and lead those fine wild goose chase who shall undertake to follow you. At this instant her discourse was interrupted by the arrival of her husband, who, when he entered the room, and saw me there, apologised for his breaking in upon us, and was about to withdraw, when the good dame called him back, and having informed him who I was, he paid his respects to me with much civility, and more decorum than one might have expected from a person of his rank; but in truth, upon further knowledge of his character, I found him to be a plain, judicious man, of few words; but the little he did say was generally much to the purpose. Some refreshment was then proposed, which was presently served up; and immediately after supper was ended the nurse and her husband withdrew for a few moments, and I saw him no more that night. She afterwards made me acquainted with the treatment she had received at Gay Bowers, and the uneasiness she had sustained upon my account. I had no sooner parted from her at breakfast time, it seems, than old Gaunt, the steward, came to her, and declared, that he had received positive orders from his master for her instant dismissal. She pleaded very importunately to have permission of seeing me once again before she left the house; but all her solicitations were to no effect. She tarried at Danbury the greatest part of the day in hope that I might come up thither, and see her; when she saw that I did not in the afternoon, she came back to

Gay' Bowes, and again solicited a conference with me, if it were only for a few minutes, but could not obtain permission; on the contrary, Gaunt, the only person she saw, treated her with great insolence. She now returned home, and having procured a letter to be written to me by a confidential friend, her husband brought it the next day; but Gaunt was inflexible—he would not deliver it to me, neither would he answer any question respecting my welfare. Not contented with these efforts, two days afterwards she came herself to the baron's, and having by her prayers and tears softened, as she supposed, the heart of the steward, obtained admittance; but instead of seeing me, she was ushered to the presence of the baron, who severely reprimanded her for the part she had taken in my behalf, and even threatened her with destruction, if he heard she banished herself any further about the matter. On her return to Densbury, she made every possible inquiry she could, but to no effect; there was not a soul that knew a syllable concerning me.

"It was now time for us to retire to rest, and the good dame insisted upon seeing me to my chamber herself; and observing that I was fatigued, helped me to undress, and afterwards sat down by the bedside until I fell asleep. She called me at day-break, saying, with a smile, 'My dear Lady Darcy, I have provided for your safety, and shall give you easiness the check-mate I drew; but then you must do as I say, without letting and contradiction, or the charm will be nought after all.' I did not at all comprehend what she meant; however, I relied implicitly on her care, and promised obedience. When we came down she insisted on my taking a small biskit, soaked in some milled clary, which the hostess had prepared; and while I was eating it she said, 'The young lady, my good hostess, you think there can certainly be well accommodated in your friend's house at Stortford, and perfectly free from all impertinent inquiries.' 'After what I have said to you,' returned the hostess, 'you may depend upon my recommendation.' Hearing this part of the discourse related to me, I was about to answer, which my nurse perceiving, she clapped her finger upon her lip, and called to her husband, who made his appearance in the inn yard, leading two horses; one of them, being more handsomely caparisoned than the other, was intended for me, and I was mounted upon it by myself, and the nurse rode behind her husband on the other; and thus we proceeded towards Ware, on the road to Stortford. But we had no sooner passed through Ware than my guide turned out of the main road into a by-lane, exceedingly narrow, at the back of the town, at the end of which we found a mean-looking drinking house. Here the nurse and her husband alighted, and he put their horse into a kind of out-house, desiring that it might remain there until the afternoon. This circumstance greatly surprised me, and I was proceeding a second time to make inquiry, when the nurse again prevented me by putting her finger to her mouth as before, saying in a whisper, 'Hedges have ears.' Having put up their horse, the good people proceeded on foot, making me still continue on horseback. We passed a large park, and afterward came again into several narrow lanes, leading from one to the other, and reached at length the ledge, where you, my dear ladies, found the gamekeeper's wife, sister to my dear nurse, and who possess the same humanity and softness of disposition. I have been with her nearly three months, treated with much tenderness, and free from any interruption. This was the secret plan the good nurse had formed; the

departure of her husband over night was to borrow the horse I rode upon from some one in this neighbourhood, and the pretence of going to Stortford was to mislead those my cousin might send to inquire after me. I have only to add, that when the good people introduced me to their sister, they took their leave, and as I have since heard, actually reached Stortford that night. Such is the conclusion of my long and melancholy history."

Lord Boteler not only gave her the strongest assurances of his protection, but promised, with her permission, to employ two or three of his acquaintances, eminently skilled in the law, to bring her cousin to severe account for his conduct. She thankfully accepted his offer, and, with becoming modesty, acknowledged the very great obligations she lay under to his lordship; but as it now grew late, and Emma had much exerted herself in relating the tale of her sorrows, the young ladies persuaded her to withdraw for the night: this she willingly acceded to.

In the morning, the young Baron Fitzallen of Marden arrived at Queen's Hall to pay his respects to Lord Edward Boteler, whose return he had heard of; Marden lying about half a mile from the Boteler mansion, and a family intercourse having always been maintained between the two lords. After some conversation on various matters, Fitzallen requested Lord Boteler's company to dinner with him, and that he would let his daughter and niece be of the party; for he had not seen the Lady Emma, who, on notice of his arrival, had withdrawn; as her various sufferings had rendered her unequal to the task of meeting a stranger. To this request Lord Boteler gave his assent, though the ladies were unwilling to quit their new guest, which, after Fitzallen's departure, they mentioned to Lord Boteler, and he entreated them to persuade the young lady to accompany them. Emma, however, prevailed with the ladies to go without her, which with much difficulty they consented to do.

Being dressed for the visit, the ladies, after taking leave of Emma, went down to the parlour, where Lord Boteler awaited their coming: they informed him that their guest wished to decline the honour of the visit; her reasons he easily conjectured, and acquiesced in her refusal. They then set out on their visit for Marden.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Incident at Fitzallen's, and a Tale.

The company having taken some refreshment, Fitzallen proposed a walk in his garden previously to the dinner being served up, which was readily acceded to, and especially as it was known that he had been making great improvements in it.

As they passed through the great hall, their attention was attracted by a tall, thin man, with a long, lank visage, about fifty years of age, but habited in garments of the newest fashion, made with the finest and most expensive stuffs that could be procured, and decorated in a tawdry manner with gold and silver-fringes, interspersed with pearls and gauds of gold. The points of his shoes were nearly a yard in length; the upper leathers cut into chequer-work, and laced upon the insteps with bobbinings of gold thread. His hood was of scarlet satin, starched and

pounced by way of ornament; and the tippet, of blue and silver, reached to the ground.

Behind him appeared two servitors in rich liveries, with badges on their shoulders, pulling along an aged man, whose garments were coarse and threadbare; and these were followed by several of the villagers, of both sexes, who seemed to bewail the mistreatment of the old man.

Fitzallen addressed himself to the beau, and desired to know the cause of this visit.

"I comes, my lord," said he, "for justice against this grey-bearded flagrant."

"And what offence hath he committed?" said Fitzallen.

"Offence, my lord!" retorted the beau. "And it pleases your worship, he is very needy and poor, and dares to upbey, as thof he was a squire of estate to the value of a hundred pounds by the year. His cloak, my lord, is faredbare, and his hosen is like a lattice; and therefore he must be an idle flagrant. He is, algetes, a main sancy jack, my lord, and heeds not those more better than himself, who be clothed in tunics and hosen of satin, or wear tawny satin cloaks gauded with gold and silver, and has money in their pockets to buy a whole congregation of such swashbucklers. Oh! 'tis a pestiloun varment, and ought to be hanged!"

"But is the man's poverty so great a fault?" said the baron.

"Why, there it is my lord," answered the beau; "the raptiril is poor, and ought to beem humble, and suspect his betterers. I warrant me, out of your lordship's hearing, he would call me a fool or a dotterel, and mayhap laugh at me to my beard. Is these thioigs befitting to a man of wealth and copulence? shall such a crack-halter, without one cross in his pouch, be permitted to answer a gentleman, and make a May-game of me? I trow not; I trow your lordship will say not: and therefore I beg you will let the heels of that there sturdy beggar be laid in the stocks; aye, and give him a whipping into the bargain."

"If so be," replied the young baron, "his offence shall be found to merit such punishment; but, I beseech you, be more explicit, and acquaint me with the nature and extent of his fault."

To this the beau replied, "I be sporting this morning, my lord, with my kestrel in my hand, according to the privilege of a man of copulence and a gentleman. The bird, seeing its game, began to bate, and before I was prepared, up comes me this here lozel, crosses me the path without the least suspect, and frightened the hawk so sadly, that away she flew, and made to the wood, and I have lost her: and you must know, that there hawk was one of the true breed; she cost me fifty golden angels, and her bells were right silver from Milthen. I called the knave to decount for his violence, and ordered my farlets to take him into jeopardy. I told him he is a scoundrel, to use such carriage to a gentleman, who is able to purchase a thousand such fagabonds; he returned me a deparment answer. I desires him to discover my hawk, when he imprudently laughed in my face. I has brought him before you."

"But did he come out of his way purposely to frighten your bird; or was he merely passing on the road?"

"I will not kiss the Angelites upon that point; but sure, my lord, it beots not; he ought to see that I are a gentleman, and well dressed, and not one to be interrupted by a patch-cleak beggar like he. See, my lord, all his garments is not worth a silver shimble; and shall he dare to make his japes with

me? Why, I can reduce a thousand angels of gold for every cross that he professes. They says as how the knave can read—that is a reproof of his idleness; for my part, I never reads, and is a franklin; while this here jack, with all his wit and his cunning, be's as poor as a mouse in a belfry; and poverty smells main strong of knavery. I beseech your worship, send him to the stocks!"

"But surely," replied Fitzallen, "it will be just to hear his defence, before I punish him."

"I hope," interrupted the beau, "your lordship will not regrade me so far as to put this here jack upon a gentleman. If it please your honour, I have purchased my franklinship and my bearings from the herald, and paid full fifty angels of gold for my consistance; and should have been knighted, but in sooth I cannot endure the sight of a naked sword."

"Knighted! you knighted!" replied the young baron, with surprise; "why, if I mistake not, you was, time past, my father's tailor!"

"Your lordship's memory is good," replied he. "I thought you would not have remembered that, now I be a gentleman; or would have spared the depression. By the mass bell! I made the constable of Staplesford put Jack, the bellows-mender of Walton, into the stocks, for calling me by that lozel name! I can," said he, shaking a large money bag, "bring my white bears to the stake, and my yellow jingle boys to the bull-ring, as well as the best of them; and marry, I have paid sauce for my punitill, and am no more a vulgar man of trade; for the king of the hornoise tells me, I may claim precedence of any yeoman in this here county. And look you, my lord, thof I says it, there are not a man in the king's communion wears better or more fashionilony garments than I; my clothing are all of the newest cut, made of the mere better stiffs, and put together with the most finest silks that the Cheap can deduce."

Fitzallen smiled; and turning to the poor man, requested to know what he had to say in his own behalf.

"Little or nothing, my lord; for this gay gentleman has nearly told you the whole of the occurrence. I was going through Bramfield-lane towards Hertford, and turning short at Hookeyes-bushes, I came suddenly upon him. He held his hawk upon his fist; my appearance frightened her, and she flew away: but truly, my lord, the fault was all his own; he held his creance so gingerly, that the bird drew the bewits from the jesses, and, of course, could not be reclaimed. He then vented a whole torrent of abuse upon me, telling me he was a gentleman. My reply was, such language ill became the character of a gentleman. He then ordered me to regain his hawk. I told him, that it was not in my power; I had nothing to lure it with, but, no doubt, he had; for I could not suppose him to be unprovided with a bait, when the proverb says, 'Men lure not hawks with empty hands;' this he styles laughing at him. He then ordered his men to take me into custody: they did so; and here I am awaiting your lordship's decision."

Lord Boteler here whispered to the young baron, who bowed his head in token of assent, and demanded to know of the beau, if he had any thing farther to say against the old man?

He replied, flippantly, "Nothing, my lord, only that this here fellow, as I told you, can read and write; and now, I thinks, these vagaries makes him idle, and keeps him poor. I never troubled my soone with these here sort of things, and now I can buy every pig of his father's sow; and I has my

footmen, my pages, and my gentleman-nasher, to walk before me; and I keep my chamberlain, and makes my clerk read to me every night out of a large new book, called the Marrow of Mobility, I bought of the king of hornoise; and so I learns all the practice of a gentleman."

"Go then, sir," replied Fitzallen; "preserve the character you have assumed; and behave in such a manner as shall deserve respect, and, be assured, respect will follow; but for this old man, leave him with me, and I will devise a punishment equal to his crime."

The beau replied, "Let it be severe, your honour, for the sake of gentility, which must be supported. He is a poor hound, and ought to be taught how to suspect his betterers." So saying, he withdrew, followed by his two lackeys, to seek for his hawk.

"This fellow," said Fitzallen to the company, "is the strangest composition of pride and meanness that ever I met with. When he was in business, he lived in a garret in London, and went to all the ordinaries that are in the vicinity of the metropolis for cheapness sake. He never made but one meal in a day, and sometimes in two days; and then he ate so voraciously, that the cooks forbade him to come to their tables; for, though he paid but the same as another man, he ate the portion of two or three. He has, by meanness and shifting tricks, saved up a considerable sum of money; and now, as you see, he has purchased the privilege to bear arms, with the cognizance and title of a gentleman; and half starves himself, and those about him, to support the rank he has had the vanity to assume. 'Tis the most incorrigible fool in nature, and can feel the power of no argument that is not enforced by a good cudgelling. Some time back he affected a swaggering vein, and was desirous of passing for a man of courage; but several sound beatings have convinced him that his heart is misplaced for fighting. In short, he is the butt of every company with which he associates; yet has not sense enough to perceive, that they admit him merely to make him their laughing-stock."

"It is difficult for me, my dear," said Eleanor, addressing herself to Matilda, "to determine which I think the most prominent feature in this tailor-man's character, his impudence or his ignorance?"

"They are, my dear girl," said Lord Boteler, who overheard her, "usually companions, and generally keep pace with each other; fortunately, however, they bear their own antidote, and never fail to produce contempt in some cases, or pity in others, in rational minds." He then addressed himself to the old man in these words: "Surely, sir, I have seen your face before now. Did you not, some years past, reside in London?"

The old man, bowing, replied: "I did, my lord; and my chief residence is in that city. I am, however, occasionally in this part of the country, for a week or two, as I can find the time, for the sake of the pure air."

"If I mistake not," returned the baron, "I purchased a book illuminated by you, containing the portraiture of our monarchs?"

"Your lordship," said he, "is not mistaken; you did me that honour."

The baron went on: "You are the man I want. I lost you on a sudden; and certainly, some time back, when I made inquiry after you, I heard that you was dead."

"As little worth, my lord," said he, "as one that was dead. Lost to the world, and to myself, my existence hardly deserved the name of life."

"Your misfortunes," returned the baron, "must surely have been very heavy ones, to occasion such an heartfelt complaining. Your name, I think, is Ingold, of the family of the Ingolds of Essex?" The old man bowed. "And I have heard your father died in good circumstances. It was said that he left to you a fortune; if not an ample one, sufficiently large, with prudent handling, to have secured you not only from positive distress, but from that dependence which you place upon your abilities as an artist."

Then the old man, fetching a deep sigh, cast his eyes upon the ground; and, wiping a tear or two from them, replied:—"I would fain keep the secret buried in my own bosom; but that more of blame is attached to my conduct, than, perhaps, it really does deserve. To relate the story of my life is but to expose my own imbecility. I am, in truth, the son of misfortune; but the evils that I have to complain of are from my own imprudence. I am the dupe of every one who will take the pains to make me such: and truly, I think that neither time nor experience will ever teach me sufficiency of wisdom to encounter the deceptions of mankind. You say, my lord, my father died in good circumstances: it is true he did so; for he was possessed of several excellent freehold estates, which he willed to be divided between my brother and myself. To my brother, who was four years older than I, he devised two-thirds of his possessions; the other third ought to have been mine; but this dear parent, not being well versed in the requisite diction for wording a will, and the legal forms of causing it to be executed, neglected a very material part, which rendered the instrument invalid, and left me altogether to the mercy of my brother: and, in justice to myself, I must say, he took the full advantage that the law held out to him, by depriving me of every penny of my patrimony! But I have done; for why should I, using the loquacity which age claims as its privilege, encroach on your fair indulgence, and take up your time with a tiresome tale of sorrow? for there are no uncommon incidents that mark my history; but the perplexities in which I have been involved are such as have possibly happened, and without much variation, to a thousand others; yet to me, a foolish, fond old man, ill read in the history of the great world, and little knowing of men at large, and of their manners, these trifles appear, I doubt not, much magnified! I have no more to say, my lord."

"Nay, nay," answered Lord Boteler, "so be it that I do not intrude on the time of my noble host, I shall wish you to go forward with your story."

Fitzallen assured the baron that he was perfectly at leisure; and that if Lord Boteler and the ladies would defer their garden-walk until the dinner was finished, he would likely hear the sequel of the good man's misfortunes. Lord Boteler and the ladies were of the same opinion—the walk was deferred, and, the company retiring to a summer-parlour, Fitzallen led in the old man, who being indulged with a seat next to Lord Boteler, proceeded in this manner:—

"The same unfortunate neglect in my father's will, which precluded me from the participation of his bounty, greatly affected my mother, who survived him; her income was so much straitened by it, that she had barely sufficient to support herself; and therefore, very little, of course, could be spared for me; and from her slender pittance alone was I to be supported! I had forgotten to say, that I was an infant when my father died; so young that I do

not remember him, and I owe my protection to my mother's fostering: she was an excellent parent, and may Christ, my great Redeemer, reward her for her care!

" Well then, so soon as I was come to lad's estate, and it was thought proper to put me forward into the world, my dear mother almost beggared herself, to place me with an artist of eminence; not considering, dear soul, the impossibility of supplying me in the manner my situation required. I was ill clothed, and altogether unfurnished with most of the materials necessary for the prosecution of my profession; my patched clothing subjected me daily to the ridicule of my fellow pupils; I had no means of joining them in any of their amusements; and in fact, I was made the drudge of the household. The Almighty Protector of mankind bestowed upon me a cheerful mind, which supported me through these difficulties; and though I saw no favourable prospect before me, still I trusted that He would not forsake me; and I have since thought that it was better for me not to have had such supplies of money as my comrades had; necessity restrained me from following many vicious indulgences which they fell into; for I fear I should indubitably have imitated their examples, if it had been in my power to have gratified my inclination; but pardon me, I am wandering widely from the subject.

" So soon as I had passed my time of servitude, without money, and without friends to help me forward, I was plunged as it were into the world, with a mind abstracted from the world; my new situation in life soon became disgusting, and I was unreasonable enough to dislike the world, because I was not well acquainted with it. In the midst of society, I fled from society, and sought from books that gratification of mind I could not meet with in what is called social life; and though, from my assiduity, I acquired some reputation, and even marks of public honour in my profession, I had not the least proper idea of applying these favourable circumstances, as I ought to have done, to my own advantage; my want of worldly knowledge made me the tool of artful and designing men: in short, I have laboured much, and others have enjoyed the fruits of my industry.

" At the age of five-and-twenty I married an amiable woman, one who, I trust, loved me well, and one I loved. Gracious God! she deserved it, and is now a saint in heaven!" (Here he paused a while, and wiped his eyes, for the tears flowed apace from them, and then he proceeded.) " She blessed me with three dear pledges of our mutual love—two sons and one daughter: unfortunate daughter! whose birth cost the life of her parent, and she herself survived but a few months!

" The loss of my wife, in whom my soul was wrapped up, made me nearly frantic; and nothing but the living for my children's benefit made life endurable." (Here again he wiped away the tears, and after a short pause went on.)

" The estates which should have belonged to me, as well as all the property my father left behind him, were of little service to my inconsiderate brother: he assumed a state beyond his income, in order to acquire more consequence in the world; his attempts, however, were unsuccessful; his plans were disconcerted; and in a short time his estates were sold or deeply mortgaged, his personal property dissipated, and had not death befriended him, by taking him from his trouble, he would most probably have spent the latter part of his life in misery, and distress.

" My dear mother, as I have said, was cruelly circumscribed in her income; and that was made more strait by frequent failures in payment, on my brother's side. ' However,' said she to me, ' these defalcations are in your favour; I have carefully registered them all—at my death, these monies must be paid up, and they shall be yours: they are all I can leave to you, and a small recompence, truly, for the losses you have sustained.'

" Soon after this I lost my dear parent. I was, unfortunately, at a distance when she died; my brother's wife was with her at the time; and she, God forgive her! received, from my expiring parent, this her last legacy sealed up, and directed for me, together with a letter for her husband, in which was contained his mother's solemn order, as he valued her blessing, to deal justly with me, and ratify her donation.

" No sooner was the breath departed from my mother, than the letters, instead of being delivered according to the directions, were cast into the fire; and so, my claim being made void, I was basely robbed a second time.

" Three years after the death of my mother, my brother died; and all that remained of his possessions he bequeathed to his wife; and in very sooth, the bequest was reduced to so narrow a compass, that she had little cause of boasting. I turned this circumstance in my mind, and putting far from me the injuries I had sustained, I took her to my own house; I shared my humble crust with her; and truly, I will say, while that crust lasted, she manifested professionally the appearance of affection; she even at times deceived me so far, that I thought her capable of being generous. Foolish man that I was! I ought to have expected the sun to shine at midnight? or that she, who never conceived an idea unconnected with selfishness, should have changed her nature? On my soul, I thought so! But I forgot myself.

" This sister of mine was of a gay turn, and certainly the most excellent economist in dress that I ever saw; she affected elegance, and with little expense maintained a show of finery that placed her on a footing with persons of opulence; and at the same time, she well supported the carriage and deportment of a person of consequence: for she really possessed strong natural talents, which she improved by reading elegant authors, and associating with her superiors; and I will readily acknowledge that I have spent many an hour in her company not only with amusement, but also with improvement.

" She had a kind of fascinating art, which I could not well account for, of giving consequence to the most trifling donations, and making such things as were intrinsically of little or no value seem worth much. This inflated shadow, as I may call it, of liberality, is something like the tricks of our jugglers, who give you a crown or an angel, enclosed in a box, to hold, and then tell you to take the coin for your pains; but on opening the box, you are sure to find it empty, yet cannot help praising the deception by which you are cheated. And she took special care that the smallest present should not pass unnoticed. I remember well, while I was in retirement, she put into a parcel of my clothes, that was sent to me, a pair of old moth-eaten hose, which had been my brother's, not worth a single cross; and to them was attached a label, on which was pompously inscribed—A Gift.

" I have often wondered that a mind so well informed could be so totally absorbed in meanness and selfishness, or that a female heart could have been

so, totally divested of tenderness, sincerity, and of justice! But I must recall my words. That heart was not divested of feeling; it was open to the passion of love, which, truly, was the constant subject of her pen; and if it is agreeable, I recollect, and can repeat to you, one of her sonnets on this subject—

“I prythee, why dost weep, my child;
And whither hast thou strayed away?
‘Mamma whipped me—called me wild,
And said I should not go to play.’

“But whither, baby, wilt thou go?
For food and clothing must be had.
‘Food thou wilt give me—that I know;
And am not I full well yclad?’

“Thou wilt outgrow thy clothing soon;
And food is grown extremely dear.
Go home, my child—’tis nearly noon;
We have no welcome for thee here.”

“Indeed! no welcome! Then I’ll try
The virtue of this potent dart.
That breast, unkind to charity,
I’ll pierce, and wound thy frozen heart.”

“Have mercy! for I know thee now,
Sly god of Love, and I obey.
I’ll listen to my lover’s vow,
And follow where he leads the way.”

Her folly, in this point of view, was as conspicuous as her selfishness in all others.

“A spruce Hibernian, young enough to have passed for her son, supposing her to have been possessed of a large fortune, paid his addresses to her. And this gay springal, with the assistance of a fine feather in his cap and a sword by his side (for he was a soldier), soon won her heart. She affected all the airs of youthful levity, and made herself a by-word among her acquaintance, and would have sacrificed every thing that was dear to her, even her money, for her dear leman’s sake. But my brave spark finding, upon minute inquiry, that, notwithstanding her specious appearance, her resources were very much straitened, and that the little she possessed departed from her at her death, bade her good morrow, and, without paying the least regard to her sighs, her tears, and her fainting fits, he forsook her for the pursuit of superior game.

“She had been some time with me, when I sunk under a very heavy pressure of misfortunes, which, joined with ill-health, fell upon me, and crushed me to the ground. I was obliged to give up my all to satisfy the demands upon me; and, even in this act of justice, my evil genius pursued me. I reposed my trust in a man nearly related to me. I assigned over to him the power to dispose of my effects: and, shame upon me, I hid myself like a coward from those who would not have hurt a hair of my head. Gracious heavens! the villain I intrusted sold my effects, indeed, and satisfied some few trifling demands for colour sake, but converted the rest of the money to his own use, and then vilified my character with my creditors: and, lest I should have come forward to defend myself, he frightened me with threats they never made, and soon after left me to my total ruin, he himself becoming a bankrupt. This event proved

him to have been a villain for the sake of villainy only; because he well knew that the money he cruelly defrauded me of could in no wise do him the least good.

“My creditors, on the other hand, were taught to believe that he had paid me the money, and that I was spending it in idleness, instead of appropriating it to the satisfying of their demands. Exasperated, as they justly might be, by such a report, they united against me, and used every means to discover my retreat. They were successful; for I never disguised myself, nor changed my name, but resided in this part of the country. Two of them, having a proper writ for the apprehension of my person, came to Hertford with the intention of laying me in prison. But Providence was pleased to prevent my falling into such disgrace. These men chanced to come late to Hertford, and hearing that the place where I resided was nearly four miles distant, and the road a by one, and exceedingly indifferent for those that were unacquainted with it, agreed to sleep at the inn, and defer the business with me to the morning.

“On that very night, according to my usual custom, I was sitting up long after the family was gone to bed, and brooding over my misfortunes. Having called the different circumstances of my life to my remembrance, I took my pen, and composed the following lines,* which, perhaps, will

“Who calls?” “A stranger passing by,
Benedighted, weary, and astray;
He asks relief, for charity,
And shelter till return of day.”

“What help, in such a woful shed,
Canst thou expect so late to find?
The night is cold, and I’m in bed;
To wake me, stranger, was unkind.”

“Forlorn and fainting, here I lie—
A fellow-creature’s claim I make—
Permit me not for want to die,
But help! oh, help! for mercy’s sake.”

“Hold on your way, and you shall find
A wealthy lordling’s open gate.
Go, friend, and be your welcome kind!
He banquets oft, and revels late.”

“Must I, then, perish at thy door?”
“Not so; the rich man’s board is spread.”
“Alas! he spurneth thence the poor!”
“And I have but one crust of bread—

“Of barley bread, full coarse and stale,
My children’s breakfast that, and mine:
Cheese I have none, nor beer, nor ale,
Nor bacon-hock, nor flesh of kine.”

“One crust is all that I require,
For dainty cates are not my due.
‘Tis cold and wet; a little fire
Permit, and saints shall comfort you.”

“May woe betide the churlish wight,
Whose ruthless heart no pity knows;
I will arise, the fire I’ll light;
Come in, for chill the north gale blows.”

better express the melancholy turn of my mind than I can do it by a simple narrative:—

What are the beauties of the opening morn,
To one, whose soul is sickening with its grief;
If the sad heart by comfort be forlorn,
No splendour can administer relief!
The noon-tide glories of the day
Are lost to me, or bring dismay;
Nor less I dread returning night:
My care-worn mind
Courts darkness now, and now the light;
Nor ease can find;
 Alternately
 From both I fly,
And seek, I know not what, new remedy! ▶

Not can I find in solitude relief,
Sequestered from the haunts of human kind;
In humble life, there is no cure for grief:
I fly in vain; I fly not from my mind:
With dire turmoil grief rankles there,
And breeds in anguish o'er despair.
Delusive is all hope, and vain,
 In life to find
The remedy for soul-sift pain:
 The troubled mind
 No soft'repose:
 Nor pleasure knows,
But longs the tedious term of life to close.

Yet with untimely death comes black dismay:
The thought pervades my agitated soul!
Shall I to ceaseless horror wend my way,
And seize the fatal dagger, string, or bowl?—
Forbid, ye guardians of mankind!
And saints, to mercy most inclined,
Forbid the deed! Unarm the hand
 That dares rebel,
Incited by the nefarious band
 Of fiends from hell.

“ See, here; ‘tis all the bread I’ve got.”
“ Enough, enough! I ask no more.
Hereafter be thy labours less;
 May favouring saints increase thy store!”

“ Holy Saint Thomas! is it true!
The scraps of bread, both small and stale,
Have leaves become, full large and new;
The pitcher foams with maulding ale.

“ The fire, too, blazes high and free;
Yet small of wood is its supply;
Nor aught consumed it seems to be,
Although the boughs be old and dry.

“ Thou art no beggar; bat, I ween,
Some fairy elf, or favouring sprite;
Or, in disguise, some angel sheen,
Descended from the realms of light.”

“ Inquire no farther where I dwell,
Nor who I am. For thee to know
Let it suffice, thou hast done well,
 And I my blessing will bestow.

“ Good health shall make thy labours light,
And plenty at thy board attend;
Stern Death shall not thy soul affright;
 Be: Charity shall thine befriend.”

They would rejoice;
If, by such choice,
I fell below the reach of mercy’s voice?

Protecting angels! with rebuke severe,
Crush those rebellious thoughts that haunt my
 mind;
And from my heart expel each guilty fear,
The dregs impatience forms and leaves behind:
 My hope, now ready to expire,
 Revive, and fan the latent fire!
Oh, bid her live to soothe my care,
 And manifest
A future prospect, calm and fair;
 Where, ever blest,
 From sorrow’s night,
 Withdrawn to light,
My God I shall behold in glory bright!

“ I had scarcely completed this poem, (which pardon me for reciting,) when I heard the outer-gate open, and the footsteps of a horse coming up the yard. The barking of the dogs announced the approach of a stranger; I went immediately to the window, but the night was too dark for me to discover who it was. I had not stood there long, before I heard my name called twice or thrice. I opened the window, and a voice I was well acquainted with requested me to come down: ‘ It is my friend Julian, the host of the Bull; or my ears deceive me,’ said I. ‘ You are not deceived,’ answered he; ‘ come down quickly, for I have something of importance to communicate.’

“ I hastened down; when he, alighting from his horse, came into the parlour, and thus addressed me:—

“ There were two strangers from London, who sleep at my house this night. They made much inquiry after you, which led me to attend to their discourse; and surely, if I am not greatly mistaken, they have a writ against you; for one of them said, by this time to-morrow the unthrift shall be cooling his heels in Hertford jail. I instantly took horse, and came over to you; for I really value you as a friend. Judge you, then, how far there may be foundation for such threatening, and act for yourself accordingly.”

“ My dear friend,’ said I, seizing his hand, ‘ you have, in good sooth, done me a most important service. On my soul, I have committed no felonious action! My misfortunes have made me debtor to those men, and my poverty is the only cause of their grievance. But I beseech you, my dear friend, advise me how I shall act in this unfortunate situation.’

“ To this he replied, ‘ Come to Hertford with me; I will lodge you in a distant part of my house. You will be there in security, for they will never suspect that you would fly thither to avoid them; and to-morrow, while they are in pursuit of you, I will convey you to a place of safety.’

“ This proposal, however, I had not courage enough to accede to — for I am ever more timid than wise; but resolved to set off before sunrise, and get to Hatfield with all the speed I could, whence I doubted not to find some ready conveyance to London; for I determined to meet my creditors, and, if possible, to prevail on them to have patience with me. My friend did not oppose this resolution; but, grasping my hand, he recommended me to the protection of God, and took his leave.

“ I returned to my chamber; and when I cast my eyes upon my two sleeping infants, (for they slept

by my side,) my courage forsook me: my heart was full—I sat down and wept. 'Poor dear babes, and must I leave you to the protection of strangers! Great God, be thou their protector!'

"As soon as I had sufficiently recovered myself, I sat down, and wrote to the good people of the house, informing them as briefly as possible of my wretched situation, and begged them to have compassion on the forlorn infants; promising that they should certainly hear from me again in the course of a few days. This letter I left upon my table.

"I did not undress myself, but lay down a while upon the bed; and the moment I perceived the dawn of day, I stole from my room, and quitting the house with as little noise as possible, I crossed the orchard, the back way, in haste, fearing my pursuers should get sight of me, nor stopped until I reached Hatfield, where I thought myself secure for the present, and ventured to take some slight refreshment, while I was waiting in expectation of a carriage, by which I might get to London, and, if possible, that night.

"Oh, blessed Lord, what were my sufferings that dreadful morning! Mercy forefend, that my enemies should feel such anguish as I did! 'What,' thought I, 'will become of my children?' Well, a carriage did come, and in the evening I reached London.

"Meantime, those who sought after me, having missed their path, did not reach the house until the family were all risen, and sitting at breakfast. My absence had not been noticed; for I used frequently to walk out early in the morning, and sometimes did not return till noon.

"My two children were taking their milk when the Londoners entered, having Giles, the constable of Hertford, with them to serve the writ. On their inquiry after me, it was found that I was not at home; but they, suspecting some collusion, would not be satisfied, swearing they were determined to have me at all events, alive or dead, for they had a warrant against me to that purpose. My little ones, hearing this, began to cry; and the whole house was in the utmost confusion. Fruiless search was made for me, and no hole or cranny was left unscrutinised. They were at length persuaded that I had made my escape, and the letter left upon my table confirmed the same; but by what means I had been informed of their coming they could not any way divine, unless, as one of them said, 'I dealt with the devil.'

"Being satisfied I was not to be found there, they went back to Hertford, threatening vengeance; where leaving the writ in the sheriff's office, they returned to London, little satisfied with the success of their journey. At London I met them, with the rest of my creditors, as I had determined to do. I laid the whole of my situation before them without the least shadow of disguise; and they were satisfied that it was through the villany of my relation that they had been defrauded of the monies arising from the sale of my effects. They blamed me, indeed, (and, surely, I was much blame-worthy,) for flying from them; but, at the same time, commiserating my misfortunes, they accommodated me with time to make them remuneration; and matters being thus settled, in six days' time I returned to my children, with my heart much lighter, and with some prospect of better days to come.

"While these troubles were passing successively over my head, my sister-in-law had ingratiated herself with a widow lady of opulence. And no wonder, for the smooth tongue and mildness of deportment, which she could assume to a charm when it was her interest so to do, were certain passports to the favour of those who loved flattery. Here she was upon the

footing of a companion, and lived free from any great expense.

"Soon after the settlement of my affairs, it became necessary for me to reside in London; and on my arrival, I took an early opportunity of visiting her. My reception, indeed, was cool enough. We parted, however, without the least breach of civility; and, as I had no expectation of assistance from her, I could not attribute this coolness to the fear that I should trouble her with my solicitations, but imagined she had met with some casual disappointment that had soured her temper.

"During my absence from town, most of the business that had been given to me was turned into other channels, and I often found the greatest difficulty in procuring employment; and the sums of money I was necessitated, from time to time, to make good in favour of my former creditors, kept me in constant poverty. Through the assistance of a friend I procured a situation for my eldest son, which took him from my hands, or it would have been impossible for me to have subsisted. It chanced, however, after a severe illness, and previous want of employment, I was reduced to my last cross, which necessity also required for the purchase of a small quantity of food, the larger part of which I gave to my dear child; and my subsistence for that day was a crust of bread and a cup of water. 'But,' said I, 'what shall be done for the morrow?' I had then a manuscript to illuminate; but the person who employed me would not advance one farthing, and it was impossible for me to complete it in less than four days. Still, as I sat working with a heavy heart, I said to myself, 'And what shall be done for the morrow? A noble would be sufficient to save me from starving, and I can return it, even with interest, at the four days end.' Here I thought of my brother's wife. 'Surely,' said I, 'she will readily accommodate me with the loan of a noble.' I instantly sent my son to his aunt; and pursued my work with more alacrity, because I was confident of success.

"It was evening before the child returned. When he entered the door, I held out my hand to receive the noble. The child innocently unclosed his empty hand in mine, and totally unconscious of what I felt, said, 'My aunt gives her love to you, and bids me assure you, that there is nobody to whom she would have sooner lent a noble'; but she has made a vow never to borrow nor to lend, and, therefore, requests you would not, in future, trouble her on so unpleasant a subject.'

"The cold eastern blight is not more forcibly felt by the tender blossoms just unfolded to the sun, than this unfeeling message was felt by me;—my heart's blood was chilled, and I was near fainting! The child, the little child, perceived my violent agitation; and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed, 'Are you not well, my father?' As soon as I recollect myself, I took him by the hand, and said, 'Have you had any thing to eat, my child?' 'Oh, yes,' said he, 'I supped daintily, and had some hypocras made sweet to drink.' 'So far,' said I, 'all is well'; and then, throwing myself upon the bed, I hid my face from him, and gave a loose to sorrow.

"I was, as you, my noble hearers, will doubtless readily conclude, so much agitated by finding my sanguine expectations so cruelly annihilated, that I was scarcely conscious of what I did. A thousand thoughts, inimical to repose, prevailed imagination; and all the horrors of poverty depressed my soul. I attempted to close my eyes, but to sleep was impossible. I anxiously wished for the morning; and when the morning came, though bright and clear, it

breught with it additional terrors; and when I saw my dear child, who, totally ignorant of the miseries which rent my heart, was sleeping soundly, I could not refrain from tears, and clasping my hands together in the agony of my soul, I exclaimed, 'And must this innocent starve also? Forbid it, gracious Heaven!' I uttered this sentence with so much energy, that I awakened the dear boy; he looked up with a smile, and said, 'Did you call me, my father?' I could not answer him; but, girding my tunic, I cast my mantle over my shoulders, and bade him sleep again, adding, that I should return anon. And forthwith I quitted the house, like one bereft of his senses.

"The way I took was merely accidental; nor was I in the least conscious whither I was going until some time after my departure; at length, on recollecting myself, I cast my eyes around me, and found myself in the fields near Islington. 'Heaven help me!' said I, looking towards the great city; and then stood for a space, leaning against the rails before the White Conduit, whither many people were assembled to drink the waters.

"While I was gazing about, some one tapped me gently upon the shoulder; and, on my turning towards him, I saw it was a person of opulence, who had formerly been an intimate acquaintance of mine; but we had not seen each other for a considerable length of time. He took me by the hand, and we expressed our mutual surprise at meeting so unexpectedly. He inquired with great tenderness concerning my situation in life, and I gave him a short detail of my misfortunes, which seemed greatly to affect him. I had no sooner ended my melancholy story, than he slipped two angels of gold into my hand, saying, 'My dear friend, I am now in town for some days; you will find me, any morning, at Thomas, the goldsmith's, in the Cheap. Call upon me as soon as you can make it convenient, and it shall go hard but we will consult upon some plan to set you forward once more in life.'

"I was much astonished at his generous conduct, and proceeded to express my soul-felt gratitude; when, laying his finger upon his lip, he said, 'Let me see you—that is all;—adieu!' He then joined some company that had just arrived.

"All-gracious Providence, and dare I repine! said I to myself, as I put my treasure into my gipsire. I then hastened home as lightly as though I had borrowed the wings of an eagle. I sent my son to purchase such things as were necessary for our subsistence, and I sat down to my business with a cheerful heart. My undertakings were successful; and, being assisted by an opulent friend in the prosecution of a larger work, which I brought before the public, and which was favourably received, I was enabled to satisfy all the demands that were made upon me; and, through the interference of my patron, my youngest son was placed in a situation to pass through the world with credit and comfort. I have now no one but myself to provide for, and I hope to complete a life of trouble with tranquillity, and to lay down my grey hairs in the grave with peace." Here the old man ceased.

"There is one circumstance in your history," said Lord Boteler, when the old man had concluded his narrative, "which strikes me as a very singular one. I mean, that when you were so sorely distressed for a small and merely temporary relief, you should have been so destitute of friends, in a city where you had long resided, that you could not turn to one who would have assisted you with the loan of a single noble."

"The question naturally occurs, my lord; nor was I in reality so forlorn as I thought myself to be. There were several who, had they known the real situation of my circumstances, would have readily assisted me with ten times that sum; but I know well that I had in former undertakings frequently been obliged to solicit these friends, and had frequently disappointed them. I had made the calculations of monies that I wanted much lower than were requisite; and, fearful of refusal, have even asked for much smaller sums. By this imprudence, I involved myself in difficulties, which every day became more pressing and intricate. I have totally lost to myself every advantage I had proposed; and such of the monies borrowed as were returned, were not returned punctually. I was therefore ashamed to make application to them on this occasion. I did not deserve their confidence, and, therefore, I did not dare to ask it."

"This circumstance, surely," returned the baron, "if it were known to your sister-in-law, will plead in mitigation of her conduct. She feared you would be, as it were, a continual pensioner on her, had she complied with your request. She had but little, as you have owned; and, had she opened her hand too widely, might have brought herself into unpleasant difficulties, without perhaps affording you any permanent service."

"It is true, my lord. She certainly knew my weakness, for I never sought to hide it from her; and, no doubt, her reasoning was built upon the foundation on which you have placed it, and it does justice to her prudence; but, as I never solicited her for a farthing before, and this so small a request, in sooth I do think, taking all things into due consideration, that what we give to her prudence must be deducted from her humanity."

The company seemed very well pleased with the old man's history. Fitzallen ordered the reeve to provide him refreshment in the refectory; and, as he left the room, Lord Boteler desired to see him at Queenhoo Hall on the morrow. "I have," said he, "a manuscript to illuminate, for which I will pay you your own price, and you shall be welcome to proper lodging, and your board at my seneschal's table, whenever you come into this part of the country."

The old man made his most grateful acknowledgments for the favour done him, and withdrew, promising to be with the baron in the morning.

As soon as he had left the room, Eleanor expressed herself as greatly delighted at the invitation of the artist; "because," said she, "I will improve myself in my drawing under his tuition, and for that purpose I will pay my court to this melancholy old man. I particularly admire him," added she, "for the love he bore to his wife; for, as far as I can learn from his story, he has not been married a second time, but lives single in honour of her memory."

The seneschal now entered the parlour, and informed his master that the dinner was on the table.

CHAPTER XV.

A Chapter that hath no concern with the History, and, for aught I know, may be as well passed over as read.

When the company seated themselves in the hall, they were entertained with the splendid hos-

pitality which became the owner of a large feudal domain. It is true, that the fastidious eye of modern taste, might have considered the feast as more plentiful than elegant, and that even the centre dish, which was a wild-boar roasted entire, would have demolished by its weight any modern set of tables, though clasped with brass holdfasts, and supported by three-clawed pillars. It is also true, that the circumstance of the boar's head being decorated with fireworks, which exploded of a sudden, would have spread dismay, rather than pleasure, through a modern party of *bon vivants*. It is, moreover, certain, that a host of retainers, whose hands were more frequently exercised in military exercises than in the service of the table, might have ill supplied the place of six well-drilled lackeys, a butler, valet, groom of the chamber, and chaisseur, whom modern taste has substituted in the place of the blue-coated serving-men of former times. Yet, if good cheer, much heartiness, and loud laughter, could make amends for the absence of such refinements, it was found at the lordly board of Fitzallen, whose guests would have perhaps as little understood the small talk of a modern select party of *élégantes*, as the beef-eating frequenter of his battery would have relished the board-wages of a modern servants' hall.

When the tables were removed, the story of the barber was resumed and discussed at length. Eleanor, especially, approved of the punishment which had befallen poor Ralph, declaring that she did not think it at all more than he deserved; Matilda, however, deemed he had been too severely used, especially as it appeared that the coquetry of Margery had been in part the occasion of Ralph's application to the sorceress. The major part of the company acquiesced with the latter, and Margery was accused of having something of the shrew in her composition.

"However," added Eleanor, with a smile, "the whole of it is so much like romance, that I admire the spirit and address of the little vixen."

"You are fond then of romances, my good lady, I presume?" said the curate of Marden, who officiated as Fitzallen's chaplain.

"Indeed I am," replied the lady; "and I was, this morning, reading one that lay in my lord's study, which much pleased me. It is entitled, 'The Squire of low degree, who served as a Page in the Court of the King of Hungary.' The princess, his majesty's only daughter, fell in love with this page, who, you may be sure, was young and handsome. The story informs us, that, suspending him to have been slain in attempting to visit her, she mourned for him incessantly for seven years. The king, to assuage her grief, promised her such a world of pretty things, that I could not help wishing that some of them might be realised in my favour."

"Pray let us hear what he promised," said Matilda.

"I must repeat it then in plain-prose," said Eleanor; "but the original, I assure you, is in poetry.

"To-morrow," says he, "my dear daughter, you shall hunt with me; you shall ride in a chair, covered with red velvet—your head-dress shall be made with cloths of fine gold, of damask white, sky colour, and deep blue, diapered with new lilies; the fringes shall be ended with bosses of gold. You shall have many enamelled chains of gold, folding over each other; your mantle shall

be made of the rich Tyrian purple, lined with ermine and white jennets of Spain, faced to the ground with bright velvet."

"What do you say to that, my dear cousin?" said she, addressing herself to Matilda.

"What shall I say," said Matilda, "but that she would be exquisitely fine."

"And now mark," continued Eleanor, "what follows:—

"You shall have music of every kind to exhilarate the heart, as well vocal as instrumental."

"Excellent!" cried the baron. "Pray go on."

"He then promises, her a leash of haresounds, bred to the hand, for her to play with; and assures her, she shall be so advantageously placed in her bower, that the hart and the hind shall be driven within her reach, and that the sweet music of the bugle-horn shall proclaim the conquest. 'Being satisfied with hunting,' says the king, 'as you ride homewards, you shall amuse yourself with hawking by the river's side, with goshawk and falcon, and other birds of the menagerie.'

"You have forgotten," said the baron, "the fine wines of various countries, and the wild fowl and baked venison that was to be provided for her refreshment."

"In truth," replied the lady, "I did not think that worth the mentioning; but to go on—'The day's sports being ended, when you come home, continues his majesty, 'your servants shall welcome you with pageants; and dames, and children of different sexes, shall form a chorus, sweet as the notes of the nightingale. You shall go to your chapel to hear the evening song, composed of tenor and treble voices, where sixty ecclesiastics shall officiate, habited in copes of bright damask, embroidered with pearls. The altar-cloth shall be made of rich taffeta, and the censers of gold en-chased with azure. The choir shall consist of famous singers, and organists of great skill; to which shall be added, the harmonic voices of children, trained to the most sublime music. From the chapel you shall be ushered to your supper; the tables being spread in rich tents of arras, embroidered with sapphires and diamonds; the tents shall be pitched beneath the green arbours, with officers in abundance at your command, to bring you every thing that can afford you pleasure.'

"The nightingale, sitting upon a thorn, shall sing her sweet notes to entertain you night and morning. A hundred knights shall attend you, and play at bowls, in cool bowling alleys, for your diversion; and when you choose, you shall walk in the green arbours, decked with curious flowers, and see the fishes wanton in the pools, and all to cure you of this melancholy.'

"Now, I think this exceedingly delightful," said Eleanor; "but this is not all. You are now to suppose the fair lady preparing to quit the garden, and being come to the drawbridge, the one half of which, we are told, is made of stone, the other of wood, we are assured she shall find a barge, having twenty-four oars, with trumpets and clarions, to row her up and down the river; and," adds the good king, "if you wish to go upon the salt water to see your distant possessions, fourscore large ships, with high towers, shall be ready to accompany you, with many others of smaller burden, the swiftest that swim upon the sea; and when you reach the haven you shall be met by galleys, having eighty oars each, and the mariners shall merrily sing as they row them."

through the water ; and if, my dear daughter," continues the good king, "you shall need any refreshment during your voyage, wine, with most excellent spites, in rich cups, with dates and dainties of various kinds, shall be brought to you in abundance. At your return home forty torches, brightly burning, shall await at the drawbridge to light you to your chamber, where every thing shall be gay and mirthful. The hangings of your bed shall be blue and white, embellished with lilies ; the curtains of camace, handsomely folded and embroidered with pepinjays, white and red, and the rings belonging to them of gold. The tester shall be ornamented with precious stones ; the coverlet shall be made with furs of ermine, powdered with fine gold ; the blankets of Persian, the sheets of cloth of Rains, and the head sheet shall be set with diamonds and rubies."

"Bless me!" cried Matilda.

"This is prodigiously fine, indeed!" said the baron.

"I thought I should surprise you," cried Eleanor ; "but I have not quite done yet. 'When you are laid in your soft bed,' continues the king of Hungary, 'a cage of gold shall be hung up in your chamber, with a long taper therein, burning with cloves, frankincense, and other sweet smelling spices, and if perchance you cannot sleep so readily as you wish, the minstrels shall wake all night to amuse you with their melody ; and here his majesty concludes."

"Indeed," said Fitzallen, "I think his promises are sufficiently ample ; but I beseech you, my dear lady, what answer does the princess make to such a profusion of kindness?"

"I will tell you," replied the baron ; "it is to this purpose—"

"In truth," my dear father, you might as well have held your tongue, for none of these things please me!"

This occasioned the company to laugh ; and Fitzallen, addressing himself to Eleanor, declared that he thought the lady was very unreasonable indeed.

Eleanor was a little disconcerted at the turn the baron had given to the discourse, and told him that he had not faithfully prophesied the first part of the lady's answer, which is not wanting in respect to her father ; the latter part is tantamount to the words of the poet, who adds that, so saying, she returned to her chamber to mourn over the supposed body of her lover, saying—

"And dearest squire for love of thee,
Lie on all worldly vanity!"

She then deplores his loss, and bids farewell to all the pleasures and comforts of life, as they were enumerated by her father, and declares that she will retire from the world, take the veil, and become a nun, and promises her lover that he shall every day have five masses sung for the good of his soul, and that she will offer three silver pence at each of them in token of the Trinity. Here, closing her lamentation, the poet describes her falling into a swoon through excess of grief. Her father, unknown to her, had overheard her complaint, and finding how deeply she was affected by the supposition of the death of her lover, assured her that "he was still living—that from a squire of low degree he had become a knight, and had performed many worthy deeds of chivalry—that

he, the king, had bestowed upon him a noble barony to make him more worthy of her fair hand."

This short speech had ten thousand times more weight than all his former promises. The lady expressed her gratitude in the most dutiful terms, recovered her health and spirits in a short time, reconciled herself again to the worldly vanities that she had rejected in her grief, and married her lover amidst the rejoicings and acclamations of the people in general.

When the curate perceived that Eleanor had concluded her narrative, he thus addressed her :— "Without doubt, my dear lady, you are well assured that the story you have related is founded upon falsehood, not only with respect to the supposed facts recorded in it, but also respecting the operation that such facts would have had upon the human mind, supposing them to have been literally true. Does it stand within the reach of probability, may I say of possibility, that a delicate young lady should have taken the body of her lover, embalmed it with her own hands, hung over it, and embraced it every day until it was consumed to dust ? for so I think the story runs. Seven years incessant grief, unalleviated by any comfort, and completely alienated from hope, are circumstances that set even probability at defiance, and especially when we add to it the anxiety lest her father should discover the true cause of her sorrow, add deprive her of the melancholy satisfaction derived from the mouldering carcass of the object of her affections. Look then to the list of promises, which are far beyond what can be realised, and merely calculated to lead the mind into the pursuit of such pleasures as cannot be procured.

"The moral also of this tale is absolutely faulty, for after the heroine had devoted herself to a life of religious recluse ness, she reassumes her former splendour, embraces afresh the vanities she had professed to renounce, and launches without restraint into the turbulent ocean of public life.

"These and the like, or indeed still greater absurdities, are continually obvious in writings of this species ; but the imagination is so easily attached to what is marvellous, that the loss of truth is not discerned—or at least, it does not become, as it ought to be, a subject of investigation ; while on the other hand, the miraculous part of the story takes a stronger possession of the mind than we are easily aware of."

"I much agree with you, Sir John, upon this subject," said Lord Boteler ; "and in the retrospect, these compositions are altogether puerile—or at least, the effusions of fancy, unrestrained by judgment ; and yet I cannot help acknowledging that I have read many of them with great satisfaction ; and even now, a passage occurs to my mind, which may be found in the celebrated poem, entitled the 'Death of Arthur.' The poet assures us that the sword called, if I mistake not, Caliburn, with which the hero achieved a variety of wonderful exploits, was, by his command, at the time he lay in the agonies of death, cast into a large lake. The circumstances of throwing away the sword are largely particularised, and especially that an armed hand, thrust from the lake, received it before it reached the water, and waved it three times in the air, and three times responsive thunders rolled through the atmosphere. The hand and the sword then descended into the water,

occaſioning ſuch a commotion in the lake that the waves overflowed their banks. I never read this paſſage without conceiving that there was ſomething exceedingly majestic in the idea, and that I stood as it were a ſilent witness of the meaſeons scene."

"I do not doubt it," ſaid Fitzallen. "I remember also a circumſtance in one of our popular romances, entitled, if I miſtake not, 'Sir Bevys of Southampton, that made a very ſtrong impreſſion upon my mind when I was a boy—nay, in fact, it is not obliterated even now.

"A champion is introduced, who had lost his wife in the midst of a large forest while he had been ſearching for water to preſerve her life. In traverſing the thicket to and fro he came at laſt to the cell of a holy hermit, and to him he related his miſfortune. The good man, having heard his complaint, shook his head, and wiping the tears from his eyes, heaved a heavy ſigh, and told the knight that 'he feared his lady had fallen into the hands of a fearful necromancer, whose ſole delight was to do evil; and if it be ſo,' ſaid he, 'without a miracle, ſhe will be loſt to you for ever. This pest to ſociety dwells at the end of the forest. His power is ſo great that he can call up the ſpirits of the dead to annoy the living; and by the assistance of a legion of foul fiends, he has buiſt himſelf a ſtrong castle, which is enveloped in a continual miſt, excepting only when he pleaſes, for the deſtruction of mankind, to permit it to be ſeen. The gate of this castle is defended by a giant-like figure in the form of a man, not made, if report ſpeaks trutb, of flesh and blood, but conſtructed by magic art, of ſteel or adamant, ſo that the ſharpeſt weapons are altogether uſeless, and cannot poſſibly inſtict a wound upon him, although he ſeems to poſſeſs every power and function of life that are common to mankind. Fifty brave knights, twice told, and more, have paſſed by my ſolitary cell towards that fatal habitation; but, alas!" continued he, 'not one of them ever re-turned.'

"Having ſaid this, the hermit was ſilent, and the knight ſat muſing for a few ſeconds, when ſuddenly drawing his dagger partly from the ſheathe, and thrusting it back with great force, he exclaimd, 'By Him who ſuffered dole for me upon the rood, I will periſh also, or revenge the death of these brave men!' 'Alas, my ſon!' ſaid the hermit, 'I beſeech you, ſwear not ſo raiſhly. The attempt is not conſiſtent with reaſon. It is abſolutely madneſſ for a ſingl man to attack a walking monument, aided by the ma- chinations of a legion of foul fiends.' 'Holy father,' replied the knight, 'ſeek not to detain me; my reſolution is irrevocably fixed;' and then kneeling down, he beſought him to ſhrive him of his ſins, to give him abſolution, and, further, to aſſiſt him with his prayers. The hermit finding that he was not to be moved, heard his confeſſion; and, having abſolved him, gave him his beneſi- cti- on. He then conducted him to the path which led to the castle, and grasping his hand, with tears in his eyes, bade him farewel for ever; 'unless,' added he, 'it ſhould please your protecting ſaint that the castle ſhall be enveloped in darkness; you will then return to me again.'

"The knight rode forward without delay, and ſoon came to the end of the forest, and before him appeared the lofty building, for it was this day viſible. It was very extenſive, and the roof of it

ſhone like gold. Being come to the outer gate, he found it ſhut, and the bridge drawn up; but by the ſide of the poſtern, he ſaw a bugle-horn hanging by a chain of iron. He applied the horn to his mouth, and blew three blaſts ſo loud and shrill, that the foundation of the castle ſeemed to tremble. The drawbridge was instantly let down with great noise, the gates opened, and the meaſeons giant mentioned by the hermit rufched from the castle.

"He appeared to be about ten feet high, was completely caſed in armour, and bore a mace of iron upon his ſhoulder. With a voice like thun- der, issuing from the interſtices of his helmet, for his face was not to be ſeen, he demanded, 'What fool it was who, being tired of life, had dared to diſturb his reſt?' and when looking round, he ſaw the knight alone, he burst into laughter, ſwearing by the gods of the Pagans that he would hang both man and horse, to bleach in the ſun, upon the baſtelements of the castle, for his teme- rity. The knight, without anſwering him, ſpurred his horse, and ran at him with his lance, which broke into ſhivers againſt his armour without even ſtaggering the owner. The knight then thought it aduaſible to deſcend from his horse; and a long and terrible combat eauſed, in which the knight could only ſtand upon the deſenſive. At laſt the giant, impaſt at being kept ſo long at bay, grasperd his mace with both his hands, and thought to daſh his antagoniſt in pieces with the blow, but the knight now ſeeing his danger, nimblly leaped on one ſide, and the giant miſſing his aim, staggered upon the bank; the knight ſeeing his aduaſage, ran againſt him with all his force, and before he could recover himſelf, overſet him, and he fell into the lake which ſurrounded the castle, where he ſunk in an inſtant, and roſe no more. A dark miſt, however, proceeded from the water, which the knight perceiving, and fearing the entrance would become inuiſible, forced his way through the portal, and over the drawbridge in the castle yard; but not without opposition from ſeveral hideous forms.

"The darkness increased ſo fast, that he had much diſſiculty to find the door which gave ad- miſſance into the castle. Having at laſt ſuc- ceſſed, he entered a large hall, in the midſt of which was a pillar of porphyry, having a ſhield hanging on the one ſide, and a ſword encloſed in a rich ſcabbard on the other, with an inſcription between them, which a large lamp de- pend- ing from the ceiling made viſible. Its impoſt was, that the knight ordained to diſſolve the enchantment of the castle muſt take the ſword and the ſhield from the pillar, and, proceeding through the dark paſſage oppoſite the lamp, deſcend into the vault below, where he was to find a fountain of black water, and a fire ſpringing from the earth beyond the fountain: he was then, in deſiance of all op- poſition, to take up a portion of the water, and to caſt it upon the fire. Beneath this inſcription was another, in large characters, by way of admo- ni- tion, to this effect: 'Consider well what thou art about to undertake; if thou fail- eſt, death is in- evi- tation. If the leaſt fear pervades thy mind, de- part in peace, and leave to a braver mind the perils that await thee here.'

"Nothing abashed by the admo- ni- tion, the knight reſolu- tely took the ſword and the ſhield from the pillar, and having read the uppermoſt inſcription a ſecond time, he entered the dark

passage, which was long and narrow. In his progress he felt something like a hand that grasped him by the helmet, and endeavoured to restrain him from passing any further. He made several efforts to strike the power that withheld him, but his sword met with no opposition. At length, with much struggling, he forced himself from the grasp, and proceeded more hastily than before; when, coming suddenly to a flight of steps, and not being in the least aware of them, he slipped down two or three, and had he not fortunately clung fast to a post that luckily projected from the wall, he would have fallen from the top to the bottom, and probably have broken his neck by the time he had reached the latter. After this miscarriage he descended the remainder of the steps, which he found to be very numerous and exceedingly steep, with great caution; but here the same invisible power that had detained him in the passage seemed to pursue him; and he received a great number of severe strokes, in his descent, upon his head, his arms, and his shoulders, which were often near beating him down. His sword and his shield were not of the least use in this extremity; for, though he was continually changing the position of the one, and brandishing the other, he could not protect himself from the repetition of the blows, or annoy his unseen enemy.

" At length he reached the vault, to which he had been directed by the inscription, and saw the fountain of black water falling into a very large basin of white marble; it appeared in continual agitation, swelling to the brim, but did not overflow. Beyond the fountain he saw the lambent flame streaming from the earth like a meteor, which cast a gloomy light over the vast cavern, but scarcely sufficient to render its various objects distinguishable. He paused a moment when he came near the basin, and looked round about him, when not perceiving any thing to oppose his progress, he concluded the adventure was nearly accomplished; but on his approach to the basin to fill the shield, the water receded from the brim, and a huge crocodile rushed from the bottom of the basin, and attempted to seize him in its jaws; he, however, leaped back, and struck the beast upon the head with his sword, but to no effect. Its skin was so thick and so hard, that it was not possible for his sword to make the least penetration; seeing this, the knight ran to another part of the basin and attempted again to fill the shield; but a stream of fire like lightning proceeded from the roof of the vault, and falling upon the shield, heated it instantaneously to such a degree, that it was with great difficulty he could retain his hold, and prevent it from falling into the basin; however, he cast it upon the ground that it might cool, and instantly it appeared, by some unseen means, to be drawn hastily towards a cavity beneath the basin, to prevent which the knight set his foot upon the middle of it, and struck at random with his sword; towards that end which was drawn forward, something resisted the blow. The shriek of a female in agony followed, with loud lamentations, in a voice that pierced him to the soul, for it exactly resembled that of his beloved consort: when looking down, he perceived the shield stained with blood, and a woman's hand, with a ring upon one of the fingers, lay within it. He hastily caught the shield from the ground, and upon inspecting the ring, he perceived it to be the

same he had given to his lady on the day of their union. It is not possible to describe the horror with which the knight looked upon the bloody hand, for he doubted not but that it belonged to his wife. He called upon her by name to answer him; but the only answer he received was, ' I die, I die ! ' in a faint voice, succeeded by a groan like that of one expiring. He kissed the hand several times, and having rent a large piece of silk from his mantle, wrapped it carefully up, and laid it upon the top of a large stone that he found by the side of the basin. In a fit of desperation, and burning with the hopes of revenge, he repeated his essay to plunge the shield into the water; but the water, as before, receded from him, and the crocodile a second time made its appearance, and he was again obliged to withdraw from the brink of the basin. He now, conceiving these attempts to be in vain, formed the bold resolution of leaping upon the edge of the basin, and fill the shield from the fountain itself; but he was instantly opposed by a fearful spectre, which rose like a black fog upon the surface of the water, and, assuming a hideous resemblance of the human form, struck him with a large mace of iron so suddenly that he could not ward off the blow, but fell backwards half stunned upon the pavement of the vault. It was some time before he recovered himself; when, rising from the ground, and leaning upon his sword, he surveyed the lake, and meditated another attempt; and though he had been so unfortunate in the last, he determined to repeat it, but with more caution. He therefore rolled a large stone to the place where he meant to mount the basin, and advancing gradually to make the first attack upon his enemy, he got upon the stone, and then setting his foot upon the brink of the basin, the spectre rose as before; but the knight striking into the midst of the dark vapour before it had assimilated itself to the human form, it ceased to rise. He struck a second time, when a loud scream was heard behind him, but instead of turning round, he struck a third time, and the vapour disappeared. He hastily thrust the shield beneath the stream, and it was instantly filled; he descended with care, and being come to the flame, he cast the water upon it. The vault was instantly enveloped in total darkness; the gushing of waters, like mighty torrents, seemed to be roaring into it; loud shrieks were heard above, and much dreadful thunder, so that the earth was shook with the reverberation of the sounds. This horrid confusion continued for some time, and the knight now expected to be drowned in the waves, or overwhelmed with the downfall of the castle, or swallowed up by an earthquake. However, by degrees, the dark clouds disappeared, and the knight, upon the return of daylight, was exceedingly surprised to find himself in a deep dell in the midst of a wood, instead of the vault of a castle. The remains of the basin, cracked and broken, it is true, appeared, but the water was gone. He came, however, to the stone where he had laid the hand of his beloved consort; and taking the wrapper to kiss it again, instead of a hand he found a small branch of a tree with five twigs issuing from it, and upon one of them a ring of woodbine. He ascended the dell by a great number of steps, which, on his coming down, appeared to be stone; and at certain intervals he observed stumps of trees, with two branches

somewhat resembling the arms of a man, and in that might be called their hands, was enclosed a large club like a mace headed with iron, and these were the invisible agents that buffeted the knight so severely upon his descent. The narrow passage was formed by a close avenue of trees; and the hand that detained him now appeared to be nothing more than an empty gauntlet, attached to a strong branch from one of the trees, bent down so low, that it was necessary to stoop down in order to pass it without interruption. Being come to the end of the avenue, he entered into a spacious glade. He looked round with great surprise, but could only just discover the least vestige of the hall, where he found the pillar with the inscription; nor could he see any part of the castle. The outer wall of the moat, the drawbridge, and gate, were all vanished. At the foot of a tall oak he found the remains of his shattered lance, and below, in the valley, he observed his horse was grazing very quietly.

"Astonished to the utmost degree at the sudden disappearance of such an extensive and massy building, he began to doubt the evidence of his own senses; 'for if,' said he to himself, 'the whole of the castle was the fallacious effect of necromancy, what can become of the knights and other prisoners detained by the sorcerer? surely he did not murder them all.' He then walked backward and forward upon the spot he conceived to be the site of the castle, calling frequently aloud, that if any were prisoners, or in distress, they would answer him; and then listening attentively for some response, or groan, or noise of any kind, that might lead to the discovery if perchance they might be confined under the ground; but receiving no answer, he determined to return to the hermit, and consult with him what was necessary for him to do more, in order to get some tidings of his beloved spouse.

"He mounted his horse, and rode on towards the old man's, but so deeply buried in thought that he was surrounded by a large company of men in armour before he was aware, and started like a man suddenly awaked from a dream; when one of them bowing to him, with much politeness assured him that he, and the rest of the company who were with him, were come to salute him, and, with the utmost gratitude of heart, to thank him for their deliverance. At the same time, they presented his lady to him, and told him that they had all been prisoners in the enchanted castle, but were at liberty upon the dissolving of the charms by which it was upheld; that the noise and confusion had been so great at the time the castle disappeared, that they, with his lady and many other females who had been confined, made their escape with all haste, and assembled together at the hermit's cell. 'He informed the lady, that it was her lord that had broken the enchantment; and we instantly agreed to accompany her in search of you.' And so the story ends; at least so much of it as is necessary for me to relate upon the present occasion. The combat of the knight with the iron giant; his passage through the dark entry, and the hand that withheld him; his descent into the vault, and the blow he received as he went down; with the perils he had to encounter to obtain the enchanted water,

and the changes subsequent, captivated my fancy, at the time they made me shudder."

The ladies declared, that the part which related to the hand with the ring, resembling the knight's consort's, and the exclamation supposed to come from her as she expired, had particularly affected them, because it had been brought in so very unexpectedly.

"And, we may add, so very absurdly, I presume," said the curate. "The circumstance," continued he, "that most excites my admiration is, that a man of lively imagination, assisted by even a moderate understanding, could seriously sit down to his desk, and collect together such a succession of incongruous ideas, and promulgate such a monstrous assemblage of incoherent circumstances, outraging reason, and setting even the smallest approach to truth at defiance."

"Without doubt," said Eleanor, smiling, "an iron giant, a substantial castle built with clouds, and trees metamorphosed into guards, and armed with maces, are palpable absurdities. But, notwithstanding the general outcry that is made against our romances, I do not recollect that I ever read one of them, without meeting with some passages that were amusing; and, in spite of the attendant improbabilities—"

"Say impossibilities, my good lady," interrupted the curate.

"Well, then," continued Eleanor, "in spite of the impossibilities, you have set the fancy afloat, and moved my mind in an irresistible manner."

"I thank you, my dear lady," returned the curate, "for this candid confession, and it is against this involuntary motion of the mind that I contend. It is the strongest reason that these books should never be put into the hands of young people; because the infant mind ought never to be misled by falsehood, nor frightened by non-existences. Instead of complicating the primitive ideas, they ought to be kept as simple and as separate as possible, until such time as the judgment shall ripen sufficiently to appreciate their worth, and connect them together. To learn a child to read well, you must teach him not only to form the syllables which compound words require, but also previously acquaint him with the value and importance of every letter singly by itself. One of the greatest sources of ignorance and superstition, is the exposition of falsities to the minds of such as are too young to discriminate for themselves; and superstition, having once taken possession of the mind, like the very enchanters and giants with which your romances abound, binds its captive in chains, and not only prevents any future progress of science, but often deludes it with false appearances, and puts a sword in its hand to fight in the defence of its taskmaster, and resist the attempts of the benevolent champion who comes to free it from its chains; that is to say, the mind thoroughly grounded in prejudices early received, will resist the voice of truth, and combat the very means by which it must be freed from the shackles of error. If it be true, and I declare I believe it to be true, that the infant mind is like a blank skin of fair parchment, how careful ought we to be, that nothing be inscribed upon it but what is consistent with truth, clearly, as in all probability, it will be indelibly written! For the first inscriptions are rarely totally erased; and even when they are,

however strong and valuable those may be which are brought forward to supply their place, they will never stand so fair and perfect as if no change had been necessary."

"Surely," cried Eleanor, hastily, "you do not seriously think that I believe in these giants, and enchanters, and spectres?"

"No, my dear lady: I am well aware that your good sense, and the liberal education you have received, has convinced you, that the achievements of the heroes of romance are mere fables. I still, however, contend, that they have a moral tendency to mislead the mind, and to fill it with inflated expectations and sensations, that, expanding its faculties too suddenly, exert the powers of imagination to form a picture of human felicity that can never be realised; which, of course, will cast a shade of insipidity upon real life."

"Surely not," returned Eleanor, "where the stories are not believed."

"Yes," answered the curate; "even in the minds that do not credit them, these stories have a degree of pernicious tendency, by showing, as I have just observed, the general circumstances of life through a false medium, and by magnifying human pride, which needs, in general, no stimulus to exalt itself. You will, perhaps, agree with me, that the perusal of these books occasions, at least, a loss of time, that might have been better employed upon the investigation of the works of nature, or rather of the God of nature, and a search after truth. In the course of this discussion, I have not called in the most powerful argument against the propagation of falsehood; namely, that it is contrary to the commandments of religion, which require us to search diligently after the truth; because, say the holy scriptures, 'God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.' But, with your permission, I will now advert to the evil arising from the promulgation of these pernicious falsehoods among the lower classes of the people. Few of them can read; to such these stories are related by others, frequently from memory only, and seldom without additions, if possible, more preposterous than are to be found in the originals themselves. They usually form a large part of a winter night's conversation, and are overheard by the children in the very dawn of life. I have seen myself the old gossips seated in a semicircle, and huddling in the perishing embers of the fire, and so affrighted by their own tales, that no one has had courage to fetch a fagot from the out-house to replenish the blaze; while the little urchins, seated in the chimney corners, have been anxiously staring their instructors in the face, and shivering with affright. Hence arises in their minds a wild confusion of ideas; spectres without heads, ghosts as tall as the church-tower, hobgoblins with saucer eyes, and the whole troop of witches, devils, and dragons, are indelibly stamped upon their imaginations; for these impressions not only operate powerfully at the moment of recital, but remain, at best, like the scars of deep wounds, even when the ripened reason and instruction shall have removed the fallacy of such idle stories; and, where neither reason nor instruction are called forward to encounter these prejudices, it naturally follows, that the gloom of superstition will pervade the whole mind, and stories, still more absurd than those you have recited, will be received as real facts. One need only refer to the

gossips above mentioned, - several of whom, I know, believe in the popular stories of witchcraft, goblins, haunted castles, and other trumpery of romance, as faithfully as they do in the sacred oracles of truth; and while these are the tutors to whose tales the young mind first opens itself, there can be little chance that the evil can be remedied."

Here concluded a conversation, which the reader may peradventure have thought tedious; and, after some ceremonies of adieu, not necessary to be described, the baron mounting his steed, and the ladies their palfreys, they retarded, with their retinue, to Queenhoo Hall.

On the morrow, as, after their matin repast, the baron discoursed with the ladies on the subject of the former day's conversation, he was suddenly interrupted by the winding of a horn, followed by steps approaching the hall, the door of which was thrown wide by one of the baron's domestics.

CHAPTER XVI.

The introduction of a new Character of great importance in the Piece, and the Sequel of the Adventure achieved by the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, which produces an unexpected Discovery.

The interruption given to the conversation, as noticed in the foregoing chapter, was occasioned by the entrance of a page, who advanced towards the Lady Matilda, and on one knee presented to her a gipsire, richly embroidered with gold and silver threads on a blue ground, having the cognizance of the Boteler family on the front, and the four corners ornamented with tassels of gold.

The singularity of this circumstance surprised the company, and the Lady Matilda inquired of the page from whom the present came? "Indeed, Gervise," continued she, "I think there must be some mistake."

"Truly, my lady," returned the page, "I know not who sent the gift. A messenger, richly bedight in a horseman's habit, booted and spurred, followed by two pages in new liveries of silk, edged with gold, just now entered the hall, when the messenger, taking a gipsire from a velvet pouch, and kneeling on one knee, put it into my hand, commanding me to present it in the same manner to you, my lady; but without mentioning its contents, or the name of the person who commissioned him to deliver it."

"You have but half performed your duty then, Gervise," said Lord Boteler; "go back to the hall, and make particular inquiry concerning the sender."

The page obeyed, but returning an instant afterward, declared that the messenger and his followers were gone, without leaving any farther information on the subject.

Gervise having withdrawn, the conversation turned on the extraordinary occurrence.

"Indeed," said the Lady Matilda, "I have no expectation of any such present; neither can I, in the least, conjecture who could send it to me."

"Doubtless," said the Lady Eleanor, taking the gipsire into her hand, "the purse contains something of consequence; perchance some curious piece of needlework. I beseech you open it."

"You may, so please you, my cousin," said Matilda.

"And in truth I will," said she, "if his lordship give me permission."

The baron consented, when, instead of needlework, as Eleanor had conjectured, she drew forth a small packet, sealed and superscribed in letters of gold, "To the most excellent Lady Matilda Boteler."

"The address," exclaimed Eleanor, laughing, "is gallant indeed. The inside, which in sooth I have nothing to do with, is, I doubt not, equally brilliant."

Lord Boteler gravely desired Eleanor to give him the letter. He broke the silk thread which surrounded it, and having perused the contents, seemed much surprised; then addressing his daughter, "Your champion, my Matilda, seems to be a lover in earnest. Listen to his address to you—

MOST ADOORABLE LADY,

'The Knight of the Wounded Heart, your slave and professed champion, humbly salutes you, and with the baron your noble father's consent, will pay his respects to you in person this day.'

"Indeed I will not see him," replied the lady. "I hope, my good lord (addressing herself to the baron) you will cause the gates to be shut against him."

"By no means, my dear child," returned Lord Edward; "he shall have free admission—his dignity as a knight demands so much; besides, it is proper that we should see him, for through him alone can we hope for an explanation of the mystery relating to this chaplet. And I will promise you, Lady Emma, he shall not readily depart without acquainting us by what means the jewel came into his possession."

While they were thus discouraging a loud knocking was heard at the gate.

"Here comes the knight," says the baron.

"Then," said the Lady Emma, turning pale, "let me not see him—let me not see my brother's murderer."

She trembled much, and the young ladies led her out of the room, and they returned to the chamber.

The baron expected to see the knight armed cap-a-pe, but instead of the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, the young Saint Clere, already mentioned as a favourite at court, a friend of the baron, and an expected visitant at Queenhoo Hall, was announced and entered. The baron caught him in his arms, and welcomed him to Queenhoo Hall.

When the compliments of greeting were over, the young courtier inquired after the ladies, and the baron summoning one of his servants, desired that the ladies might be informed that the chevalier Saint Clere had done him the honour of a visit. Matilda blushed at hearing his name, which did not pass unnoticed by her cousin, who rallied her thereupon.

The stranger lady begged to be excused from going down with them, alleging the fright occasioned by the thought of seeing the man who had possessed the garland had so much affected her that she could only, by the gloominess of her appearance, cast a damp upon the cheerfulness of such a meeting. "Indeed, I feel myself very faint: and, with your permission, will lay my head upon the pillow for a while; perhaps I may be able to obtain a little rest which will refresh me." They then apologised for leaving her, and Matilda sent her own servants to attend upon her.

When they entered the room, Saint Clere, rising from his seat, approached them gracefully, saluted their hands, and led them to the upper end of the

hall, and placing their seats beside the baron's, sat himself next to Matilda.

The conversation turned upon ordinary subjects, and especially respecting the disappointments that many had met with by the king's sudden removal from St. Alban's, which prevented the tournament, for which great preparations had been made.

"But indeed," said the baron, "my daughter and her cousin were not so much disappointed as many were, for they had their tournament at home; but the victorious knight, instead of being rewarded, bestowed rewards, and then disappeared without any one being able to discover whence he came or whether he went, or whether he was goblin, or flesh and blood like other men."

"Why, that is marvellous; and pray, my lord, what did he find to fight with?"

"I'll assure you," cried Eleanor, "he had where-withal to manifest his skill and his courage—he vanquished a great giant sent by the Queen of the Fairies to proclaim her beauty, and made him confess that my cousin Matilda was the sun, and her diminutive majesty the moon only, for which reason she ought to confine herself to her midnight orgies."

"Pie, cousin," interrupted Matilda; "you knew that it was only a May-game."

"The champion, however, was certainly in the right," said Saint Clere.

"Then," said Eleanor, in a whisper to her cousin, "is not that the very turn, the air, and expression of the portrait?"

Matilda made no answer, but nodded her head in token of acquiescence.

The chevalier seeing how closely they watched him, was a little confused, but recovering himself speedily, the baron thus addressed him:—

"The king's sudden departure from St. Alban's led me to suppose that the rebellion in the north had been much more formidable than it appeared to be, and occasioned an alarm which I suppose is hardly yet entirely subsided."

At mid-day the board was spread with all the magnificence which became the house of Boteler, and the afternoon was past in cheerful and delectable discourse of love and arms. But at the approach of evening Saint Clere informed the baron that he had some letters of consequence to write, and particular orders to give to his servants charged with the delivery of them. The baron then led him into the library, where he assured him that he should meet with no interruption. Saint Clere sat down at the writing-desk—his servants were summoned, and the baron withdrew. The baron then took Fitzallen a turn in the garden; and in the mean time, the ladies took the opportunity of visiting the fair stranger.

At the close of the day the attention of the company was diverted by the clangour of trumpets sounded in the outer court, answered by the shouts of the populace.

"No doubt," said the baron, "the unknown champion is now come; he approaches, like a man of battle, with a great train."

Matilda was somewhat flattered by the suddenness of the blast, but soon recovered herself, and assumed a cheerful air to avoid the raillery of her cousin, and the baron smiling, promised to protect them.

Two pages entered the room, and ushered in the chief herald, who, in his master's name, the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, requested an audience with Lord Boteler and Lady Matilda. His lordship consented, and said that he might be conducted into the great hall.

The herald withdrew. The baron and the ladies

went into the hall, where taking their seats, the knight entered, habited as he had been on the first of May, and masked in the same manner. He was followed by his five esquires, with a numerous retinue of pages. Approaching the high deas, he put one knee to the ground, and bowing first to the ladies and then to Lord Boteler, he said:—

"My lord, I know not what punishment your lordship may think due to my temerity, for assuming the cognizance of your noble family, and declaring myself without permission to be your lovely daughter's champion. I am well convinced, such honour far transcends my merit."

"Tis gallantly said," replied the baron; "but now the May-games are over, the pageantry that might then be the occasion of innocent pastime is prolonged beyond its proper limits; and for this reason I, as her father, demand of you, upon the honour of true knighthood, to inform me, without disguise, what is the end and purpose of this untimely proceeding. You know, or ought to know, sir knight, I am not a man to be trifled with; nor shall you be permitted to depart until I have full satisfaction upon this mysterious subject."

"Lord Edward Boteler, I know you well, nor am I less well known to you; the blood that animates these veins is noble and uncontaminated by baseness. There is reason, aye, and a cogent one, that makes me wish to wave an answer now to the latter part of your speech. I must, however, add, that if it had come from the lips of another, it should have shut up my tongue. The heart unused to fear is not easily awed by threatenings. Speak, then, Lord Boteler, and I will truly answer you."

"There is a freedom in your manner that much pleases me," returned the baron, "and I sincerely wish you may so answer my interrogatories as to remove the suspicion which belongs to some part of that day's adventures."

"Speak out, my lord, and if it shall be found that I flinch from the truth, let me be degraded from the honours of knighthood, and punished as a traitor."

"I have one witness more to call, and I beseech you have the patience for a few minutes."

The baron then commanded of the attendants to go, and, if possible, prevail upon the Lady Emma Darcy to come into the hall, and while they were absent he thus addressed the knight:—

"What made you so much signalise my daughter?"

"Because I love her."

"But did you not know she had a father?"

"Yes, and therefore am I come; and though I love her dearly as my life, I have not told her so. Honour required I should have your consent."

"You much astonish me," replied the baron.

And at this instant the young ladies returned, leading the stranger deeply veiled, and they seated her between them to support her, for she trembled, and seemed very much agitated.

The stranger eyed her with great firmness, but did not appear to be the least moved at what passed.

The baron then caused the garland to be brought, and holding it to the knight, inquired if he knew that ornament?

"I know it well."

"It seems you do so. How came you by it? Did you purchase it?"

"No."

"How came you by it then?"

"By heirship. She that once owned it now is dead, and in her right 'twas mine."

"False! false!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Who says 'tis false?" said the knight, much agitated. "By heavens, 'tis true! and in the foremost rose you'll find the portrait of an armed man."

"We know it well," replied the baron; "and who is that armed man there represented? Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Tis myself."

"Thyself!" exclaimed the baron.

"Yes," said he, shooting up, and elevating the vizor; "compare the copy with the original."

"Good heavens! Saint Clerc!" cried the baron.

"Saint Clerc!" said Matilda and Eleanor.

The fair stranger exclaimed, "Tis, 'tis my brother!" and fainted.

All was in confusion. Saint Clerc, who knew nothing of what had happened relative to the chaplet, and intended only a piece of mirthful gallantry, was alarmed at the tragical issue of the pageant, and approaching the lady whose veil her companions had thrown back for the sake of the air, cried out—

"All gracious Heaven! 'tis she! 'tis my sister!" and clasping her in his arms, he brought her near to the door.

This afforded fresh matter for astonishment. Matilda and Eleanor stood looking on each other, without knowing what to say; and the baron, rising from his seat, said:—

"By holy St. George, but this is strange indeed; the winding this mystery may well match our most marvellous romances!"

When the newly-discovered relations were able to converse with composure, Saint Clerc briefly related, that, being to visit Queenho Hall, by the baron's invitation, he had contrived the pageant in which he acted, "in order," he said, "to give a romantic turn to the adventure; and on our coming to Tewin, I found every thing prepared, as it were on purpose, for my reception, by mere accident; and that the ladies would be present at the May-games desired by my lord's servants. Ne sooner were they concluded, than we began, to the no small amusement of the persons assembled. In the evening we returned to St. Alban's, without being discerned by any person. I hastened after the king, and reached him at Warwick, where we received the news, that the insurrection was quelled; and the court prepared the day following to return to London."

Nothing could exceed the contentment of these noble persons, at the winding up thus happily of these mysterious events. The Lady Emma hardly could credit the evidence of her senses, that her beloved brother was yet alive and in safety, and in the favour too of his sovereign, through which she joyfully anticipated (though more on his account than her own) the restoration of the honours and dignities of their family. Her wonderment at the chances which had befallen him, and the questions she had to ask in relation to every particular of his fate since their sad parting, were endless; she marvelled greatly also why he had supposed her dead; but to all queries the young Lord Henry turned a deaf ear, saying, "Nay, nay, sister mine, defer till to-morrow these kind and anxious inquiries. To-morrow I shall, with the good leave of this noble and most gracious company, narrate the whole chain of mine adventures; but to-day, remember, I am the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, and the champion of the fair Lady Matilda; and I shall not therefore divert one hour of my devoted service to her, nor encroach on the passing

cheerfulness of this much wished-for day, by the narration of any trifling adventures, for such my story will be found to contain."

The Lady Emma's eyes filled at this termination of the young baron's speech; but wiping away a tear, and smiling playfully, she said, "Nay, brother, sure am I, if you are a true knight to the Lady Matilda's service, I shall have so much grace with that lady, as to prevail on her to exert her authority, and to command you to satisfy my curiosity;" then turning to Matilda, "Shall I, sweet lady, or no?" added she.

The Lady Matilda, profoundly blushing, and casting a downward look towards Saint Clare and his sister, attempted to falter a reply; whereat Lord Boteler, observing the confusion of his daughter, took up the conversation, and said, "As my power over Matilda is yet paramount, I shall interdict the exercise of her over the young knight, at least till he hath unarmed, and tasted the hospitality of Quesnahoo Hall." So turning to the seneschal, who was in waiting, he commanded him that the young Lord Henry's esquires and retinues should pay take of the best cheer of the hall and kitchen, and graciously taking the Lady Emma's hand, he led her forth, the Lord Fitzallen accompanying the Lady Eleanor, and Saint Clare escorting the Lady Matilda.

While the young Lord Henry was unarming, and the ladies were left alone, "I foresee," said the Lady Eleanor, who, to the graces of innocence and simplicity, united an arch turn of mind; "I foresee, fair cousin, that the events of this day, romantic as they doubtless are, will terminate, like all other romances, in love and matrimony; unless forsooth you send forth your champion to a seven years' probation of arms, in the conquest of giants, and rescue of distressed damsels."

"Thou wilt ever banter, cousin," said Lady Matilda.

"Nay," cried Lady Eleanor, "I would not distress you; but there is something so wondrous in this reciprocal attachment! so sudden! Doth it not resemble enchantment, Lady Emma?"

"I doubt," replied the gentle Emma, "the adventure will want one characteristic of enchantment, viz., its falsehood; as I trust, I may presume to hope, that my amiable brother's merits, after being duly proven, may entitle him to look up so high, as to the Lady Matilda Boteler; for I confess, from the first moment I saw her, I thought them formed for each other."

Lady Matilda bowed gracefully, and blushed, adding, "That it was no small recommendation to her, were any necessary to so accomplished a cavalier as the Lord Henry Saint Clare, that he was so closely connected with a lady so amiable as his sister."

The bell announcing supper now broke up the conversation of these ladies, who descended, mutually pleased with each other. After a repast, in which every circumstance which could be gratifying to the feelings of the noble parties concurred, on the ladies expressing fatigue, the party broke up for the evening, and retired to their several apartments.

Next morning, after breakfast, Lord Henry Darcy commenced the narration of his adventures, in the following terms.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Adventures of Henry Darcy, Lord Saint Clare—His Peril at the Inn, and miraculous Escape.

"In parting from my dear Emma, I experienced an unusual depression of spirits, and more than once I repented that I had not insisted on sitting up with her the whole of the night; but the great recommendation given by the hostess of her beds, and the apparent candour of the host, operated very strongly in removing every serious suspicion of evil.

"The innkeeper ushered me to my chamber, and, having lighted the lamp, he inquired at what time I chose to be called in the morning? I told him, if the weather should prove fair, my wish was to rise soon after day-break. Having received my answer, he bowed, and, committing me to the protection of God and his saints, he withdrew. I then fastened the door of my room, and threw off my mantle, my surcoat, and my pourpoint; but, without displacing my hose, I laid myself upon the bed, and drew my mantle over me as a substitute for the coverlet, which was too thick and warm for the season. I endeavoured to sleep, but a strange foreboding of some evil accident occupied my mind: the storm seemed to be increased; the thunder was now very loud; and the wind, whistling through the crevices of the casement, soon extinguished my lamp; but the reiterated glaze of the lightning amply supplied its deficiency. It was turned of midnight before I closed my eyes in sleep, and I was very soon awakened by the drawing back of the bolt of my door. It opened, and I saw a lantern, with no light but in the front, approaching my bedside. It was impossible for me to make an attack upon the person who carried the light without imminent danger, for I did not doubt his being well armed. I therefore resolved to counterfeit a deep sleep. He came up close to me, and holding the lantern in his left hand before my eyes, with his right he presented a sharp baselard to my throat, saying, at the same time, in a low tone of voice, 'Young gentleman, it is time to rise.' I made no reply; but seeming to sleep soundly, he retired from the bed, and going towards a cabinet, at one corner of the room, he essayed to force it open; but meeting with much resistance, and fearing that I should be awakened by the noise, he returned to me, and holding the light and knife in the manner he had done before, repeated the same words. I still pretended to be asleep, and he renewed his attack upon the cabinet with more success. I saw him take thence several goblets and other vessels, apparently of silver; but in opening one of the drawers, he made more noise than usual, which brought him to me a third time as before. Receiving no answer, he returned; but as he was putting the spoils into a wallet he had brought with him for that purpose, the cover of one of the goblets fell upon the floor, and pitching upon its edge, it rolled round several times before he could stop it; and in order to catch it the more readily, he laid the baselard upon a stool by the side of the cabinet, and stooped down upon one of his knees. I watched the moment, and conceiving that my life depended upon a single effort (for no doubt he was convinced that so much noise must have awakened me), I cast off my mantle, sprung from the bed, and throwing myself upon his back, thrust him to the ground, and

holding his arms down to prevent his rising or striking me, I called out as loud as I could for assistance, when suddenly I received a blow upon my head, which deprived me of all sensation.

" When I came to my recollection, I found myself in an army-spittal, surrounded with invalids; they were soldiers and my countrymen. I was prodigiously surprised at my situation, and as soon as I was permitted to talk to my comrades, I learned from them that I had been discovered, nearly naked and covered with blood, in a wood near the place, by a company of soldiers, who were out that way upon the forage, and the commanding officer perceiving some faint signs of life, had humanely caused me to be wrapped up in a warm hosepland, and conveyed to the spittal. I was farther informed that I had been there better than fourteen days, suffering under a dreadful fever, and frequently delirious; at which times I called for a young lady, my sister, and spake of punishing the murderer. The word sister, with the succeeding clause, brought suddenly to my mind the recollection of the horrors of that dreadful night in which we had been separated. I could no longer contain myself with patience, but starting upright upon my couch, exclaimed, with great energy, ' All-gracious Heaven! where is she? where is that sister?'

Here Emma burst into tears, and turning from the company, hid her face with her kerchief. Her agitation was not unnoticed by St. Clerc; he therefore moderated his tone of voice, and continued the narrative.

" My comrades, fearing that I was relapsing to my former state of delirium, begged of me not to exert myself so much; and would not answer me any further questions.

" The leech soon afterwards came to dress my wounds, and observing that I was calmer than usual, and that the fever was considerably abated, entered into conversation with me. When he found that I was an Englishman of family, and had heard the detail of my misfortune, he promised to cause immediate inquiry to be made after my sister. ' You may safely trust to me upon that account,' said he; ' but on your own, I must beseech you to compose yourself. You are by no means past danger, and rest is absolutely necessary for you, if you wish for life; and surely you ought to live, if it be only for your sister's sake. If she be alive, she may need your protection; if she be dead, who is there so proper as yourself to bring the murderer to justice.' His promises much quieted my mind, and some cordials that he administered procured me rest; so that, in the course of two or three days more, I was sufficiently recovered to leave my bed, and walk out into the fresh air.

" I had received, it seems, no less than nine wounds in the body, in addition to that upon my head, which was by far the most dangerous. The captain, to whose kindness I owed my preservation, hearing that I was able to walk about, did me the honour of a visit. I expressed my gratitude to him in the most pointed terms that I was master of; and the politeness with which he received my address proved at once the goodness of his heart, and the excellence of his education.

" I assumed the name of St. Clerc, and my good friend, who had heard of the family, and their consequence in Essex, promised to present me to the regent, Richard Earl of Warwick, who then

kept his court at Abbeville. He was as good as his word; and I being furnished, by his generosity, with a suit of garments becoming my rank, was introduced to the earl, who having heard a brief recital of my misfortune, received me with every mark of attention. I volunteered into the service, and his excellency promised me the first company that should be vacant; in the mean time I was ranked as a lieutenant, and placed under his immediate inspection.

" But, my dearest Emma, I see your eyes reprobate me. They seem to say, ' And where the while was the anxiety, the solicitude, you ought to have entertained for the sufferings of a sister? In very truth, my dear sister, you was not forgotten; I was not ungrateful.'

" You may remember that the physician promised that every inquiry should be made concerning your situation, nor did he fail in the execution of his promise; for having consulted with the captain, to whom he communicated the information I had given to him, they employed for the purpose the ancient, a discreet and sober man, and one who had frequently been intrusted with matters of great consequence, and he took with him a small party of soldiers, in order to release you in case they found you detained by force. He did not think it proper to show himself first at the inn, for fear of creating some alarm, but stopped with his party at a cottage about a mile distant; where he met with an old lady, from whom he learned, that the people of the inn had been twice examined before the magistrates of the district, through the interposition of a foreign nobleman, but that nothing had transpired to criminate them respecting the loss of the young gentleman, said to have been murdered in their house, and of course they were set at liberty; but that the young lady had been removed to the convent just by that her friends had been sent for, who appeared to her justification; and that she herself had departed thence two days previous to their arrival. The ancient having heard this recital, very properly judged, that the best use he could make of his time, was to go to the convent immediately; which he did, and with some small difficulty obtained an interview with the lady abbess. He related to her the manner in which I was miraculously preserved from death, and begged, on my account, to be fully informed concerning the lady, my sister. From her mouth he received a detail of the treatment you had met with; your dangerous indisposition; your happy recovery; the visit you received from our dear friend; and your departure for England. Such was the import of the good ancient's information.

" You will readily imagine, that the recital of your sufferings made a deep impression upon my mind; my anxiety, however, was in some degree alleviated, by the hope that you had safely reached England, and I doubted not you would find an affectionate reception at Gay Bowers. I addressed a letter immediately to my uncle, (for I was not then informed of his death,) in which I entreated him to receive you with great tenderness, and, to acquaint you with my wonderful recovery from the wounds I had received in the chamber of the inn. You shake your head; of course, then, you never saw that letter. No, Gaston is—But I shall have reason to speak concerning him anon.

" The moment I was capable of taking the field, I did not let slip one single opportunity of exerting

myself as a soldier: and having been successful in several skirmishes, in which I had engaged by choice, I gained the good opinion of the regent; and one of the companies becoming vacant, he remembered his promise, and I was appointed the captain. Soon after my promotion, my patron died, and the Duke of York succeeded him in his dignities.

" In the celebrated attack made by the English forces upon the camp of Charles the Fifth of France, as the duke was passing the Ouse, his horse was slain under him, and his person in great danger, which being seen by me, I urged my company to follow me. We passed the water, nearly up to our chins, and arrived time enough to assist his excellency. The landing, though obstinately opposed, was made good, and the enemy was defeated with great slaughter. The spirited behaviour of the troops under my command was highly commended by the duke, who sent for me as soon as the battle was over, and graciously attributing, to the service my men had performed, much of the success of the action, was pleased to knight me on the field, at the head of our army.

" Charles fled with much precipitation, and the regent pursued him to Ponthein, which place was taken by the English forces.

" The French army, meantime, stood aloof; and although various methods, on our part, were used to provoke them to battle, they all of them failed; insomuch that the king was suspected of cowardice by his own soldiers, and many of his subjects openly expressed their disapprobation of his conduct, and symptoms of revolt appeared in the army itself. In order, therefore, to regain the confidence of the people, he returned suddenly to Ponthein, at a time the regent, who had no suspicion of such a movement, was absent, and attacked the place with so much impetuosity, that it was carried before the English army could arrive to afford its succour; and Charles himself, it is said, was among the first that entered the city. This action, which proved his valour, restored him to the favour of the soldiers, and his army daily increased by recruits, who flocked around the royal standard. The regent afterwards retreated to Abbeville, in order to wait for reinforcements, which had been promised him; but, before their arrival, overtures for a truce were proposed, and the terms being acceded to on both sides, the commissioners were appointed to meet at Calais, and the war was concluded for a time.

" While our forces lay at Ponthein, the Duke of York one day sent for me, and, when I appeared before him, he said, ' Come hither, Saint Clere, I have a commission for you to execute; I have promised, to a noble lady of our court, a present, from France, of some jewellery. Now, as I am not well versed in the excellence of these ornaments, and having heard that you have a taste for them, I am desirous that you should go into Ponthein, and purchase for me one of the most elegant carcanets of goldsmith's work, embellished with oriental pearls, that you can meet with: let it be very rich, and exquisitely wrought, because I am particularly anxious the gift should be esteemed well worthy of the lady's acceptance.' ' But the price, my lord,' said I. ' That,' replied he, ' I leave entirely to you: if you shall find a jewel that pleases you, let not that be an object.' I then promised his grace that I would exert my utmost ability to give him satisfaction, but added, at the same time, I was fearful he would find that my judgment had been greatly over-rated. ' Be not concerned on that ac-

count,' said he, smiling; ' I make no doubt I shall be well pleased with your purchase.' I bowed, and withdrew.

" I went to several shops where articles of jewellery were exposed to sale, without meeting with a chevessail, or carcanet, sufficiently beautiful to answer my purpose. However, upon my return, I had a carcanet put into my hands, which pleased me exceedingly; and while I was bargaining with the goldsmith for the purchase in an inner-room, he was called forth to the shop. In a few minutes he returned, and after apologising for his leaving me alone, he said, with a smile, had you inquired for a chaplet, instead of a chevessail, I could now supply you to your wish. ' See, sir,' said he, presenting a chaplet, ' there is one. I think I never saw its equal, either for the elegance of its ornaments, the materials with which it is composed, or the excellence of its workmanship.' ' Is it possible?' cried I, taking it in my hand. ' Truly, sir,' returned he, ' one would hardly think it possible. I have been many years in my profession, and dealt largely in jewels of this kind, but, in truth, I never saw a more rich or more beautiful chaplet in my life.' ' In the name of Heaven,' said I, impatiently, ' whence had you this jewel?' He instantly replied, ' It is but this moment put into my hands by a man who waits without, to know if I will purchase it from him.' ' Purchase it, my friend! Yes,' added I, starting from my seat, ' nor spare for price.' The goldsmith was greatly surprised at seeing me so much agitated at the sight of the chaplet, and replied, ' You seem to know somewhat respecting this jewel.' ' Yes,' said I, ' more than you suspect. It was my sister's: it was stolen from her, and I was nearly murdered by the thief. Perhaps the very man who brings it is the thief; it is, therefore, proper that he should give a fair account how it came into his possession; and, for this purpose, I claim your assistance. It may prove the means of detecting a murderer, and bring him to justice.' ' Speak lower,' replied the goldsmith, still more astonished by my assertions, ' or he may be alarmed, and make his escape. If you are positive respecting the jewel, I will call him hither, where you may have an opportunity of examining him yourself; for he has other jewels, and some plate to dispose of.' I applauded his precaution, and, assuring him that I was not mistaken respecting the chaplet, begged that he might be introduced.

" I placed myself behind the door, so that, when he entered the room, he could not readily perceive me, but at the same time I could easily seize upon him, if occasion required, and prevent his escape; but the jeweller, unknown to me, had taken a further precaution, and sent for two officers of justice to wait without the issue of the examination. The man very readily followed the jeweller into the room, who led him towards the light, and then inquired what other articles of this kind he had to sell. ' None,' said he, ' like that; but here is a brooch of gold set with pearls, a carcanet, and a goblet of silver, but I have had the misfortune to lose the cover.' ' The articles you have offered to sale,' said the goldsmith, ' are certainly valuable ones, and I should have no objection to become a purchaser; but, at the same time, I must observe, it is dangerous for me to do so from one who is a perfect stranger. You must not, therefore, be offended with me for wishing to know by what means they came into your possession.' ' Not in the least,' said he, with an air of confidence; ' the question is a fair one. You must know, sir, that I am an innkeeper at Amiens, and

reside at the sign of Saint Denis. It happened, some little time back, that several English officers took up their lodging with me, where they lived always in the style of noblemen, and run up so huge a score that I was nearly ruined. It was impossible to bring them to any proper reckoning, and at last I was obliged to take these articles, with several others of like kind, in the stead of money. Some of them I sold at home, and, being obliged to come hither upon some business of consequence, I was desirous of knowing what these would bring at a foreign market.' 'And what may you judge they are worth?' answered the jeweller. To which he readily answered, 'You know their worth much better than I. They are articles I never dealt in before: but a thousand crowns would not make me amends for the expenses I have been at; and very possibly I have undervalued them.' 'Certainly,' said I, coming forward with my face partly covered by the tippet of my hood, 'you have greatly undervalued them. But I desire to know how long you have been master of the hotel of Saint Denis?' The unexpected interruption from me, and the question I proposed, produced evident signs of confusion in his countenance. Recollecting himself, however, he replied, 'About ten years.' 'Not so many months past, to my own knowledge, it was occupied by one who bore not the least resemblance to you. But, villain!' cried I, advancing closer to him, 'dost thou not know who slept at the inn near —, when the tempest compelled him and his sister to take shelter there?' Thus saying, I threw back my hood; and the moment he saw my face, he fell upon a bench, which stood behind him, like one bereft of his senses: he stared as though his eyes would have started from their sockets, and his hair stood upright. As soon as he could give utterance to his speech, he exclaimed, 'It is his ghost! Saints defend me! It is the chevalier's ghost!' and he was making towards the door. 'No! thou artif,' said I, interposing and stopping him, 'thou shalt learn, to thy confusion, that I am not a ghost.' In the mean time, the goldsmith had called the officers, who entered the room, armed with their brown-bills, and, seizing upon the trembling culprit, eased me of my charge.

"It may be proper to observe, that the moment I saw the face of the man, I recognised the features of the hostler, who took care of our horses at the inn, on the night of the robbery. And the signs of guilt which he manifested at my mentioning the circumstances of that event, were sufficient proof to me that I had not been mistaken. On his part, when he saw himself secured, he assumed a sullen air, and would not answer any interrogation that I put to him. We therefore took him before the provost, to whom I briefly related the manner in which I had been nearly murdered in the inn, on the night the robbery was committed, and proved the identity of the chaplet, by describing the cognizance of our family, which is concealed beneath the rose leaf, upon the front of the jewel. The robber declared, that he was altogether innocent of the crimes alleged against him; that he never was at the inn where I asserted the robbery to have been committed; but, on the contrary, insisted upon it, that he was the master of the Hotel Saint Denis, of Amiens, and that the jewels and plate had been put into his possession by a party of English officers, in the manner he had previously affirmed. The circumstance, however, appeared sufficiently strong against him to invalidate his assertions, and to warrant his detention, and he was committed to prison.

"It was then judged necessary to send to Amiens,

and to —, and confront him with the testimony of both the innkeepers; for I assured the magistrate that the master of the Saint Denis, where I dined a few hours preceding the robbery, did not bear the least resemblance in person or features to the man; and the other, who I now believed was not implicated in the guilt of his servant, would readily acknowledge him to have been such.

"Having paid the purchase money for the carcanet, I took it to the duke, who honoured my choice with his entire approbation. I took the liberty of relating to his grace the extraordinary event that had happened at the goldsmith's, which so far excited his curiosity, that he determined himself to be present at the next examination of the culprit, which took place as soon as the two innkeepers were brought to Pontthein.

"When the prisoner was brought into court, and questioned concerning the robbery, he continued to assert his innocence, and still persisted in being the innkeeper at Amiens, notwithstanding the real master of the Hotel of Saint Denis appeared to confront him. 'I am sorry, Eustace,' said the host, 'to find myself necessitated to appear against you. For the good of your soul, add not such falsehoods to your other offences; confess what you know of the foul dealing laid to your charge, and endeavour, by your contrition, to assuage the anger of Heaven.' He held down his head, but returned no answer. 'You know the prisoner, it seems,' said the duke to the innkeeper. 'Perfectly, my lord; he has frequently been at my house, as a guide to passengers, and to take back their horses, when hired at his master's.' 'And what was your opinion of him?' 'In sooth, my lord,' replied the host, 'I believed him to be a sober and honest man.' Several questions were then put to the culprit, but he pertinaciously refused to return any answer. The torture was then proposed, but his excellency desired that it might be deferred until they had heard the examination of the other innkeeper; who was accordingly brought into the court, and being desired to look at the prisoner, instantly exclaimed, 'It is Eustace! my faithful hostler. By the crown of Saint Louis, I am surprised to find thee here! Poor knave, I'll lay my life he is innocent.' 'Of that hereafter,' said the duke, hastily; 'but we have some questions to ask you, and shall request you to answer them without any comment. You know the man—he was your hostler?' 'He was, your honour,' replied the host. 'And how long has he left your service?' 'Some three moons back, and please your honour; I cannot be certain for a day or two.' 'It shall not need; but inform us why he quitted your house; what was his fault?' 'No fault, your honour; but because a relation of his had died, and bequeathed to him a mort of money.' 'You parted, then, good friends?' 'Exactly so, your honour.' 'And have you not seen him since that time?' 'Never, your honour, till this moment.'

"His grace then desired that I should stand forward; and ordering the innkeeper to survey me with attention, he inquired if he had any recollection of my features. After looking earnestly at me some time, he answered in the negative. The duke desired him to repeat his examination. He did so; and at last, with some degree of agitation, replied, 'I think, (but surely my eyes deceive me,) I think he resembles a young chevalier, who slept at my house the night I was robbed, and who (God forgive me,) I really took to be the thief.' To which I answered, 'I am in truth that chevalier, and the thief himself, if I mistake not, is also near at hand.'

"The articles which the prisoner had offered at

the goldsmith's were now produced in the court; and the moment his master saw the goblet of silver, he declared it to be one of those taken from the cabinet.' 'And this brooch,' said he, 'is mine; I will swear it on the bible-book; but where is the beaker, the tankard, and the cup?' When looking earnestly at the hostler, he shook his head, and went on—'Oh Eustace! how could you serve your master and your dame so foully; as God is my judge, we have been as good as a father and mother to you.' Eustace was silent, nor would he answer the magistrates. The torture was, therefore, brought forward; and as the officers of justice were preparing to put him to the question, he thought proper to speak, and requested to be released from their hands, and made the following voluntary confession:

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Progress of Iniquity; or the Danger of associating with bad Persons, exemplified from the Confession of a Murderer.

“‘I am,’ said he, ‘a lost man—for the proofs of my guilt are so manifest, that the falsehood I have hitherto asserted can no longer answer any good purpose. Heaven help me! I am both a thief and a murderer.’

“‘Go to, Eustace,’ said his master; ‘why, you are stark-wode; a thief mayhap you be, but not a murderer, for the chevalier is alive.’

“The innkeeper was ordered to be silent, and the culprit proceeded—

“About two years ago, there came into our neighbourhood a gay young man, who dressed well, and had much the air of a person who had been well nurtured. He used frequently to take his morning refreshment at our house; and, pretending to be very fond of horses, he passed much of his time with me, observing how I managed them, and inquiring concerning their qualities and their value. In return for the trouble, as he called it, that he gave me, he constantly made me some small present of money; or, if I best approved it, treated me with liquor. Accursed be the day and the hour in which I first received his money, or drunk his liquor!

“Our attachment increased daily, insomuch that we were seldom asunder when a leisure hour permitted me to join his company.

“One day, he came into the stable to me, while I was rubbing down the horses, and showing me a large handful of gold coin, said, with a smile, ‘Eustace, is it not a pleasant thing to be master of one's time, to have plenty of money, and to live at one's ease, rather than to rise early, go late to rest, and be at the beck and call of others, to work and slave for them, without the least prospect of bettering one's own condition?’ ‘No doubt, my good young master,’ said I, ‘and you are happy in having such excellent friends to supply you so amply.’ ‘Go to, Eustace,’ answered he, ‘you talk like a fool upon these occasions. I have no friends but myself—I am my own friend, and I will be your friend, if you will permit me. Here is an earnest of my regard for you;’ and so saying, he thrust into my hand eight or ten pieces of gold. ‘My brave lad,’ continued he, ‘let us befriend ourselves, and the

world will respect us. Follow my advice, and we will set the rich at defiance; for we will always secure the power to serve ourselves. Are not riches diffused among the idlest and most unfeeling parts of mankind, in no respect our betters? Do they not live in the utmost dissipation, riot, and debauchery; and support their crimes by the wealth extracted from the labours of the poor: in return, they hold the labourer in contempt, and monopolise, without remorse, the good things of this world, which ought to be generally divided among the community at large? None ought to be rich—none ought to be poor; but every one should share in the bounties of Providence.’

“Perceiving I listened with attention to his harangue, he went on:—‘Every one, I repeat it, ought to have his share in the common stock of wealth; and, mark me well, when his claim is set aside by the strong hand of unjustifiable oppression, it becomes his duty to seize upon his right, and plunder those who withhold it—I mean the rich—as we would an open and avowed enemy, (for such in fact they are to us,) and supply our own wants, by taking what is due to us, and superfluous to them. In short, I found that my gay springal was a thief, and I, miserable man! fell into the snare he had prepared for me, and, in an evil hour, became his associate.

“We committed several robberies in the neighbouring forests; but none of them were productive of any extensive booty. However, we conducted ourselves with so much caution, that no one entertained the least suspicion of us. But, alas! the moment I became guilty, my mind was depressed by a thousand fearful imaginations, such as I never experienced before. They pursued me continually, and poisoned all the pleasure I might otherwise have derived from the increase of my income. I looked back with anxiety to the days of innocence, and made unnumbered resolutions to return to the path of rectitude; but in vain: instead of pursuing them with proper resolution, and shunning all converse with my worthless companion, I unbosomed my anxiety to him, who soon laughed me out of my repentant fits, as he called them, and confirmed me, in defiance of my own conviction, to continue in the road to destruction.

“It occurred to me, that our intimacy (for we were now almost inseparable companions) might be noted, to our mutual disadvantage. I communicated my fears to him upon this subject. He concurred with me, and made his visits less frequent than formerly. Our future meetings usually took place after the family in the inn had retired to rest; for I had the keys of the back gate, which communicated with the stable-yard, and could go in and out at pleasure, without occasioning the least disturbance. My companion was equally conveniently situated, having taken up his residence at a widow woman's, in a lone house upon the borders of the forest, and not above a quarter of a mile from the inn. He had constantly a master-key in his pocket, and could command access to his chamber at all times, in which he had contrived to make a secret closet, where we deposited such parts of our depredations as were proper to be concealed.

“About six, or perhaps eight months back, I called, as usual, at his residence, and was informed by the old lady, that he had not been at home the whole of the day. I repeated my inquiry the succeeding evening, and received the same answer, and more than three weeks elapsed without my

seeing or hearing from him, so that I gave up all expectation of his returning. He is, thought I, fallen into the hands of justice; and am not I dependent upon his mercy? I began, therefore, to reflect seriously upon my situation. Sometimes I determined, to fly the country; and then, again, I conceived, that it would answer no good purpose for him to betray me. However, at all events, I determined to reform my life, and content myself with the rewards of honesty.

" I was one day, in the stable, fully occupied with these thoughts, and I fell upon my knees to supplicate the assistance and forgiveness of my Creator; and while I was in the midst of my devotion, the gay seducer entered, suddenly, before I could rise or suppress the sorrows of my heart. He perceived my embarrassment, and bursting into a loud laugh, he clapped his hand upon my shoulder, saying, ' Have I caught you, coward, whining and pulling like a girl that is, mother-sick. In the name of the great devil, are you a man fit to be employed in great undertakings? For shame, Eustace! Well then,' continued he, finding I made him no answer, but stood, with my eyes fixed upon the ground, ' return to your sneaking honesty, and be a slave for life; equal the beast you rub down in drudgery; and when old age prevents the exertions of labour, learn, like them, to live hard, and end a life of misery in the next ditch you come to.' ' What would you have me do? ' cried I. ' Do! ' returned he, hastily; ' die like a dog—for you are content to live like a mean, heartless, despicable reptile. The devil fetch me, but I thought better things of you.' ' My conscience,' said I, ' accuses me, and I am fearful.' ' Indeed! ' retorted he, interrupting me, ' a thief, and a talk of conscience, forsooth: for shame! be a man. Summon your resolution to your aid; none but fools and children are frightened by shadows. Let's have no more of conscience. But, look here—I am not returned empty-handed; here is conscience enough to make us merry for two twelvemonths I trow.' So saying, he pulled from his gipsaire a large purse of gold, and taking thence as many pieces, as he could well grasp in his hand, he put them into mine, swearing at the same time, that I was a whining, fop. ' Take these,' added he, ' and enjoy yourself as you ought to do. When these are gone, the forest will furnish us with more.' What shall I say? the sight of my companion, returned so unexpectedly, and the golden harvest, he presented to my eyes, overpowered my virtuous resolutions; and his upbraiding made me ashamed of the humble posture in which he found me. I engaged again with him in his nefarious practices, and, by degrees, my mind became callous to all sense of honour, or remorse.

" He had frequently prepossessed to me to quit my master, and live, like him, in perfect freedom, which might readily be done by retiring to some distant part of the country, where our persons and connections were altogether unknown; ' and, as your master,' said he, ' is certainly much indebted to you for a long and faithful service, it is just, on your part, that you should pay yourself, by taking with you his plate, and such valuable articles, as can be easily carried away.'

" I did not approve of this proposal! it appeared to be replete with danger, and I had not courage enough to act the villain so openly as to fix the guilt upon myself, and place my sole dependence upon my flight from justice. For this reason, I resisted his solicitations, and waited for some conve-

nient time, when the robbery might be carried into execution with more apparent safety.

" This opportunity occurred soon afterwards, and at a moment when we little expected it: for, on the evening in which it was committed, my partner and I had agreed to make an excursion into the forest; for which purpose, I had got my business done at an early hour, and obtained leave of absence for the night, under pretence of visiting a relation at a neighbouring village.

" My comrade joined me in the afternoon, and, at the instant we were setting out, the rain, with the thunder and the lightning, came on so suddenly and so violently, that it prevented our journey.

" While we were conversing together, the chevalier and his sister came into the yard. I took their horses, and concluded, from the richness of their habits, that they were persons of consequence. I also observed the gentleman was particularly anxious for the safety of his mail, which was fastened with strong straps and buckles to his saddlebow; whence I naturally concluded, that its contents were very valuable. My companion was perfectly of the same opinion; and our determination was formed, without the least hesitation to get it into our possession.

" I kept close watch in the house to learn what was going forward, and where the guests were to be lodged, without appearing to have the least degree of curiosity, when I found that the red room was appropriated to the use of the young gentleman, who, I made no doubt, would keep the mail in his own care; and in this room, I well knew, was deposited the cabinet which contained my master's plate, and other articles of value.

" When I communicated this intelligence to my comrade, his countenance brightened with joy, and he exclaimed, ' By the devil and his dam, we are made men! Gold! Eustace, resist no longer; we will empty that cabinet of its precious contents: and by a masterpiece of contrivance, throw all the auspicion of the robbery upon the chevalier.' ' Impossible,' cried I. ' By the blood,' quoth he, ' thou art but a dottarel, friend Eustace; the matter is not so difficult as you suppose it to be. The success of the enterprise depends upon one circumstance only, and that is, the drawing back of the bolt belonging to the door of the chamber wherein the chevalier is to sleep. Devise that, and leave the rest to me.'

" It occurred to me, that this might be executed by removing part of the panel of the door, over which the bolt passed; but the difficulty was to effect this without being noticed. However, while my master, with my mistress and servants, were occupied in the kitchen preparing the supper, and warming the bed-furniture, I took the opportunity of examining the door; and, to my great mortification, found that the bolt slipped upon a broad plate of iron, to which it was strongly attached, and this plate was too thick to be sawn through, without taking up much more time than the circumstances would allow, and making so much noise as must inevitably have occasioned a discovery.

" I was upon the point of giving up the undertaking, when, passing my hand by accident over the door-post, I found a stone loose in the wall, beneath the arras, which being removed, I could easily thrust my arm through the aperture, and alip the bolt back without any difficulty. Rejoiced, at this discovery, I replaced the stone, and drew down the arras over it as it had been before, and hastened to acquaint my friend with my success.

"We now waited anxiously for the time when we were to carry our plan into execution. He undertook to perform the robbery, and I was appointed to stand at the top of the stairs to give timely notice in case of alarm, or assist him, if help should be found necessary.

"As soon as all was quiet in the house, I introduced my comrade, who was provided with a lantern, having a light in the front only, and even that he could cover, if occasion required. We ascended cautiously to the chevalier's chamber. I took my station according to his direction, and he, having slipped back the bolt, entered the room, where he remained a considerable time without any kind of alarm being given. It was a tremendous night, the lightning flashed incessantly, and ever and anon the thunder shook the house. Hardened as I was in impurity, I trembled, and was several times inclined to abandon my situation, raise the house, and throw myself into the arms of justice, when I heard a violent scuffle in the chevalier's chamber, the cry of murder, and a call for assistance. I rushed in, when by the light of the lantern, I saw my comrade upon the floor struggling with the chevalier, who held him down. I instantly struck the young gentleman upon the head with my gisarme, when he uttered a groan, and fell apparently lifeless at my feet."

"Spare me, my brother," cried Emma, casting her eyes upon him, bathed in tears; "in mercy pass over the horrors of that fearful night; it is impossible for me to endure the recital."

"My dearest sister," said Saint Clere, embracing and kissing her, "my tale is drawing space to the conclusion; for myself, my sufferings were now at an end, for I was insensible to all that followed."

"The robber continued his recital in this manner:—'Finding that the people of the house were not alarmed by the outcries which had been made, we put the plate and jewels we found in the cabinet, together with the mail belonging to the young chevalier, into a wallet we had prepared for the purpose, and conveyed them quietly into the stable; whence we returned, and having wrapped the body of the chevalier in his mantle, we carried that also into the stable, leaving the room door open, and the things about it discomposed as they were.'

"Before daybreak the storm began to subside, when we saddled the young gentleman's horse, on which we laid his body and the wallet with the treasure we had acquired. We proceeded instantly to his residence, where we hastily examined our booty, and found it exceeded our most sanguine expectations. It was then agreed that I should instantly return home, and get to bed before any one was up in the house, and there to await the alarm being given. I was perfectly successful; and in the morning, when called from my bed, came down and joined the outcry, no one having the least suspicion that I had quitted my chamber before, or that I was in the most distant manner implicated in the robbery.

"In the mean time, my comrade had undertaken to carry the dead body, for such we supposed it to be, into the deep recesses of the wood, to bury it there, and then to ride to some distance with the horse, which he would either sell, or make away with, as it should best appear to suit his purpose. What passed at the inn in consequence of the robbery does not concern my fate, and, therefore, I shall omit to mention it. Three days passed after the commission of this deed of darkness, and I saw

nothing of my partner, so that I really concluded he had played me foul. In this, however, I did him wrong; for, on the fourth, he came to me, and made me acquainted with the reasons for his absence.

"The moment we parted, he took the horse, with the body of the young chevalier, into the wood, and was seeking out a place proper to hide it, but was interrupted by the trampling of horses, which seemed not to be at any great distance. It was necessary, therefore, for him to leave the body, partly covered with leaves, in a dell near the path side; but he did not quit it without giving it several stabs with his dagger, which I blamed him for, because I thought it was a wanton cruelty. He then mounted the horse, and rode farther into the forest, in order to avoid discovery from the company, which he supposed to be approaching, and returned privately to his own residence, leaving the horse in a thicket, far removed from any beaten path. Towards the evening he took a spade in his hand, and went to the spot where he had deposited the body of the chevalier, designing to bury it; but, to his great surprise, the body was gone. This event alarmed him so much, that he dared not return to his lodging, or come to me; but hastening to the thicket where he had left the horse, jumped into the saddle, and made the best of his way towards Amiens. On the borders of the forest he recollects there was a deep pit, and fearing the horse should be known in the town, he killed him upon the brink of this pit, and cast him into it. He then proceeded to Amiens on foot, where he passed the night at an obscure house of public entertainment, where several vague reports respecting the robbery were bandied about among the travellers who baited there; but nothing transpired that could be depended upon. He left Amiens early the next morning, and wandering about from village to village in the neighbourhood, till he at last obtained full information of what had passed at the inn, and, finding that no suspicion had fallen upon him or me, he returned on the fourth day, as I have stated, and we congratulated each other upon the success of our enterprise, and the next day was proposed for the division of the booty.

"I accordingly met him at his chamber, where he had placed part of the spoils in two parcels, exceedingly unequal to each other in point of value, and the jewels were set aside by themselves. He then made a long harangue, in which he attributed the contrivance and success of the robbery to himself, and, therefore, he claimed the privilege of making the first choice. Perceiving that I did not appear to be well satisfied with the allotment of the parcels, he boasted much of his honesty: 'I had,' said he, 'the whole in my power, and might have made myself master of it all; but my wish is to act uprightly with a man I esteem as my friend.' I then took the portion set apart for me, and said nothing in return; when he proceeded: 'These jewels we have been much deceived in. They are made up merely for show; the stones are counterfeit, and the gold adulterated; to which I may add, the hazard of disposing of them is so manifest, that they are not worth contending about. Now, I will give you ten pounds in crowns for your share of these trinkets, though, by all that is sacred, I do not believe I ever shall return the money! but I do this because you do not seem perfectly satisfied with your parcel of the plate, and to convince you of my fair dealing.' I was ready to burst with indignation at the proposal; but, as I had determined to be even with him, I assumed an air of cheerfulness, and acquiesced without starting the least shadow of

objection. On his part he seemed highly delighted with my docility.

" Having thus finished our business, he took me by the hand, saying, ' My dear friend, we must part; it is no longer proper for us to be seen together. This transaction is of too much magnitude to remain without further investigation. The gisarme, which unfortunately we left behind us, was mine; and though I do not think it can be traced to me, it is a circumstance that does not please me;—but the removal of the body has so much of mystery in it, that I cannot help being alarmed. If you resolve to stay where you are, (and, indeed, I do not see that you have equal reason to depart immediately,) it will be rather advantageous than hurtful to you that I should disappear.' I agreed with him, but, at the same time, expressed my ardent wish to know in what part of the world he designed to take up his residence. To this he answered, ' It is impossible to speak positively to that question; for men like us, who depend upon good fortune only, are subject to many casualties, more than the rest of mankind. I have, however, already discharged my lodging; early in the morning I mean to make my departure; and, in order to escape the notice of the villagers, I shall assume the disguise of a pedler. I shall traverse the lower part of the forest, and make the best of my way to Laundrecy, where I probably may lighten my pack, by disposing of part of my trinkets. I shall thence proceed by circuitous route to Paris, whither, if you should be inclined to follow me, we may again lay our heads together to our mutual advantage.'

" We then took leave of each other, and I returned home, disgusted with the villainous dissimulation of my comrade. My first care was to secure the part of the booty which had been allotted to me, and I hid it in a hole I had made for that purpose in the ground, beneath a large corn chest in the stable. I now determined to sacrifice my comrade to my vengeance, and make myself master of all his riches; and, in order that I might have a fair pretext for my absence, I turned a new purchased horse into the road adrift over night, pretending it had broken from the pasture, and went out early in the morning to seek after it.

" I may here observe that I am tolerably expert in the management of the cross-bow, and had a good one of my own, which I frequently used to destroy the vermin, and this I concealed under my cloak, with half a dozen quarrels headed with iron.

" Thus armed, I went to the wood before day-break, and concealed myself in a thicket adjoining to the path which led to Laundrecy. In less than two hours he came disguised, as he said he should be, with a large pack strapped over his shoulders. As he passed me I took a sure aim, and shot him through the body. He fell instantly to the ground, and lay groaning in the agonies of death. When I came up to him, he cast his eyes upon me, and seeing the bow in my hand, was certain that he owed his death's wound to me, when raising himself upon one arm, ' Is it possible?' he cried, ' is it possible that thou shouldest be my murderer? Justice, in truth, requires my life, but even justice claimed it not from thee!' ' What,' said I, ' hast thou to do with justice, thou who first made me a thief, and then robbed me of the wages due to my iniquity?' ' I dare not appeal to Heaven,' quoth he, ' for Heaven hears not wretches so wicked as we are. The vengeance of hell has overtaken me, and I die without hope, encumbered with all my foul doings! May the curses of hell follow thee, thou villain! May

you suffer under the hands of a lingering executioner, and die amidst the execrations and hootings of mankind, a shame to devils who hold faith with each other! and may you be hated for ever by all the fearful spirits who inhabit the regions of the damned!' and with these horrid imprecations, he breathed forth his soul.

" Here he seemed much agitated, and paused a while; but reverting himself in a few minutes, he went on. ' I dragged the body into a dell, and covered it for the present with leaves, and such rubbish as I could find at hand; the pack with the treasure I hid in another place, and returned home, pretending that I had searched every where that I could think of for the horse, but without success. In the dusk of the evening, I went again to the forest, buried the body, to prevent its being found, and brought the pack unnoticed to the stable. I remained with my master some time after the departure of the young lady, but not without continual uneasiness, expecting every moment that something would happen to bring me to justice; besides, my riches were of no service to me there, for I dared not offer any of the spoils to sale, for fear of detection. I therefore determined to remove, and the better to avoid suspicion, I assured my master I had received letters from the friends of a distant relation, who was lately dead, and had left me a [considerable legacy, and that the forms of the law required my presence; accordingly we settled our account; he paid me what wages were due to me, and we parted on terms of friendship.'

" Here the innkeeper fetched a deep sigh, and shook his head; the prisoner then hesitated a moment, and then went on. ' I had packed up my treasure, and removed it to a secret place in the wood the evening before my departure. I purchased a strong horse, in order to travel with more expedition. I went to Paris, where I resided several days; here I spent in idleness and dissipation a large portion of my wealth, and probably should soon have beggared myself, had not an unsuccessful attempt I made to cut the purse of a young lady of quality, occasioned me to make a quicker retreat from that city than I at first intended. I have since that time experienced several changes of fortune, and it is now two days back since I arrived in this city, where I intended to have disposed of the remaining part of those treasures I obtained by my villainy. And here, as you see, offended justice has overtaken me. The chaplet is in truth the property of the chevalier, the plate is part of what belonged to my master, the brooch is his, and the carcanet I found among the spoils belonging to my comrade.'

" Here he ended, and to this confession, which was taken down in writing by the clerks of the court, he signed the cross in witness of the truth. His condemnation was, that his limbs should be broken, and his body, still living, exposed upon a wheel, there to die a dreadful and lingering death. But," continued St. Clere, " at my intercession with the regent, the cruelty was remitted, and the wretched culprit was hanged without any previous torment being practised upon him. Thus, through the disposition of Providence, the chaplet was made the instrument of detecting a robber and a murderer, and once more returned to my possession."

" It is a very singular and a very interesting incident," said Lord Boteler, " but before you resume the thread of your history, my dear St. Clere, permit me to make one observation." St. Clere bowed, and the baron went on. " I cannot well account for the proceeding of the robber, when he first entered your chamber. One would naturally have thought, that

his first attack would have been upon you, rather than upon the cabinet, and especially as he believed you was in a very sound sleep."

"The same observation, my lord, occurred to me," said St. Clere, "and previous to the execution of the criminal, I questioned him respecting that transaction; and he knowing that the remittance of the torture had been made at my request, very readily made me the following reply:—'You may recollect that I told you my comrade, previous to the robbery, would, by a master-piece of contrivance, turn the suspicion of the guilt upon you. Now this very procedure, which seems so strange to you, formed a material part of his plan.' 'If,' said he, 'I shall be fortunate enough to catch the chevalier asleep, and can ride the cabinet without disturbing him, we cannot fail of success. For having got the plate, together with his mail, into our possession, we will convey it to the foot of the stairs before we attempt to seize his person; our attack shall then be made upon him with united energy, and our first business must be to thrust a gag into his mouth to prevent his outcries; we will then bind him hand and foot; and convey him upon his own horse into the wood, where we will murder and bury him, and then dispose of the horse as occasion may require. If, on the other hand, he should in the struggle make such an alarm as to waken the people of the house, we will then put out the light, and I will carry off the booty, while you may slink to your bed before the assistance can reach him, and then it will pass for a robbery by the foreign banditti. The design, it is true, did not succeed as he had planned it, and had your cries been heard, our safety would have depended upon a precipitate retreat, without possibility of our effecting the robbery. If you wish to know the reason why we resolved to take you so far away before we put you to death, the answer is plain; because we were well aware that the bedclothes being stained with your blood, would be considered as a proof that you had been murdered. But our design was to counteract that idea, and fix the suspicion upon you of having committed the depredation, and made your escape. Yet, after all our caution, we did not recollect that the blood which flowed from your wound remained upon the floor, nor that we had left the gissane behind us in the chamber; so far through haste we failed in the execution of our plan. These circumstances rendered, it is true, the adventure more mysterious; but as it happened, they afforded no light for the detection of the authors.'

"Having no further question to ask, our conversation finished here. And his confessor entering the cell at the same time, I left him to the admissions of the holy father, heartily supplicating forgiveness for him from the God of mercy."

CHAPTER XIX.

Lord Henry returns to England, and becomes a favourite at the Court—The warmth of his temper displayed in a Dialogue between him and the Baron St. Clere at Gay Bowers—His Adventures concluded.

"The investigation of this horrid transaction rendered it necessary for me to make known to my patron, the Duke of York, that I was really the son of Lord Darty, and had assumed the name of my

mother's family on account of the disgrace which had befallen my father. His excellency promised to me his interest at the court to obtain a reversal of the decree of outlawry, and put me in possession of the estates, which, by right of inheritance, had belonged to the Darlys, and this promise he faithfully performed. 'You are anxious,' said he, 'I doubt not, to return to your native country; and indeed it is proper that you should, for your presence may perchance be necessary. Go, therefore, and use all expedition; I shall charge you with letters of consequence to the king, and must desire you to deliver them to him as soon as possible.' I assured him I would exert my utmost diligence. At a late hour the letters were put into my hands; and early in the morning I and my retinue, being provided with excellent horses, made the best of our way to Calais, passing the sea to Dover. We hired fresh horses; and without stopping to sleep upon the road, proceeded to Windsor, where our gracious sovereign then held his court. Having obtained admittance to the royal presence, I delivered my letters; and when his majesty had perused them, he said to me, 'Your commander has spoken very warmly in your commendation; and so far as I may judge, from your diligence in the speedy delivery of these letters, you deserve his praises. Do not absent yourself from the court, for it is my desire to speak farther with you at some more convenient opportunity.'

"The moment I was at leisure I wrote to my uncle Gay Bowers (for I was not yet acquainted with his death), informing him of my arrival in England, and intention of paying him a visit in a short time. I also addressed a letter to you, my dear Emma; not doubting but you was there.

"The next day the king favoured me with a second interview. He questioned me concerning many things respecting the war, and seemed to be perfectly satisfied with my answers. He again told me that the Duke of York had recommended me to his favour; 'and I am resolved,' said he 'to do something for you.' In short I had the honour of conversing with his majesty several days, when one morning, taking me into his closet as usual, he put two small rolls of parchment into my hands. 'One of these,' said he, 'is the reversal of a decree of outlawry passed upon your father, and the other is a deed for the restoration of the Darcy estates to you his heir. I would have you,' continued he, 'go directly into Essex, and take possession of your patrimony. You will find all things there accommodated for your reception.' I fell upon my knees to thank him for his goodness, but he commanded me to rise, and said with a gracious smile, 'If the manners of the court are not unpleasing to you, return as soon as convenient—I shall be glad to see you near me.' What kindness, my dearest Emma, what condescension, from a mighty monarch!

"I joyfully obeyed the mandate of my sovereign, and the moment the horses could be made ready for me and my retinue, I departed from Windsor, and passing through London, reached Billericay, where I slept that night."

The Lady Emma turned away her head at the mention of the word Billericay, and wiped away the tears that involuntarily started from her eyes, which her brother observed, and paused for a moment; but having nothing further to say respecting that place he went on.

"Early in the morning I proceeded towards Gay Bowers, and reached Danbury by nine o'clock. I

stopped at a little inn a small distance from the church, to bait the horses, and afford my servant some opportunity for refreshment, and here I first learned that my uncle had been dead several years, and that he was succeeded in his titles and estates by his son, Gaston, 'who,' says the innkeeper, 'if I dare speak out, I should say, does not inherit the virtues of his father, but live alone, as it were, and starve himself in the midst of plenty.' This unfavourable account of my cousin's disposition made me resolve to leave my attendants at the inn, and as his residence was at no great distance, to visit him alone, for surely, said I to myself, he will think I am bringing a regiment of soldiers to quarter upon him, and this may make him out of temper with me.

"I found him in the midst of a large and noble ruin of a mansion which had for ages been supported by the family of the Saint Cleres with splendour, but which now was tumbling about its miserable owner's ears. I made myself known to him, and was received with such a petrifying coolness, as might well have offended one who had not the least claim upon his generosity. Surely, thought I, this wretched being thinks that I am come to solicit his charity. The first compliments, which in truth deserved no such appellation, were no sooner passed between us, than I inquired for my Emma, and requested to see her. He cast his eyes upon the ground, and shook his head, but returned me no answer. I repeated the question with some degree of impatience, and desired that she might be called immediately. He then began a tedious oration, interrupted by frequent pauses, and obscured by continual allusions to events that I was altogether unacquainted with. I heard, however, that some months back a person, calling herself the daughter of Lord Darcy, had imposed herself upon him—that he had received her with great kindness—that she had repaid his benevolence with the basest ingratitude, and deported herself with so little decorum that it was impossible for him to endure it; his remonstrances, which he had urged with so much tenderness and affection, were of no effect; she admitted the addresses of a dissolute young springal, who probably had followed her to Danbury, and at last disappeared with him, but not without robbing him, her benefactor, of a considerable sum of money. 'I hope and trust,' continued he, 'this lewd woman was some impostor. If she be really our relation, she has debased the blood of two noble families.' I had not patience to hear him any farther; his story was inconsistent with reason. I rose suddenly from my seat, and smiting my hand violently upon the table, exclaimed:—'You lie, unnurtured Gaston! you lie, like a villain! and did not the noble blood of your ancestors flow in your veins, I would make you eat this dagger, hilt and all, or recant your blasphemous falsehoods. Oh, my Emma! You debase the blood of the Darcys! You tarnish the glory of the family of the Saint Cleres! Heaven grant me forbearance! If you have mistreated, as I suspect you have, this dear relation, I will take ample vengeance for her wrongs. I will, by my hope of Heaven's joys hereafter!' 'What!' cried he, starting back affrighted, and trembling, 'dost thou come to threaten me in my own house—to murder me upon my own hearth?' 'No! perfidious Gaston,' said I, thrusting my dagger into the sheath, which I had half drawn out, 'your life is safe

enough: I will not make bare my weapon upon a trembling coward; but for thy tale of slander—Gracious Heaven! shall she, so highly born, so nurtured, so sensible of what is due to female honour, fall from the paths of rectitude at once, and plunge into the gulf of infamy! By the soul of my father, it is false; it is a damned lie!' 'You called me unnurtured,' said he, in a tremulous tone of voice, 'and truly I know but little of the gay and dissipated part of the world. My manners are homely enough; but such as they are, they serve me well: and tell me, fine sir, what shall I say of yours, who intrude yourself, unasked, upon me, overwhelm me with a torrent of abuse in my own house, and give me the lie to my beard? Such manners ill become a gentleman; such manners would disgrace a plebeian. I would the tale were false—I would that the glory of the Saint Cleres were not tarnished; but I have a witness. It is fit you should first hear, and then, perchance, you may moderate your high tone: if not, I must tell you, I care not how much you shorten your unwelcome visit.'

"To this invective I returned no answer; and he rung the bell, which stood before him upon the table, when an elderly woman entered the parlour, to whom he addressed himself, and commanded her to satisfy me respecting the behaviour of the young lady, who had resided there some time back, and pretended to be nearly related to him. She obeyed, prefacing her discourse with a long account of his benevolence and forbearance to that naughty damsels, as she was pleased to call her. This was followed by detail of her ungrateful behaviour in return for the favours she had received. She then informed me, that the night previous to the departure of the lady, she had seen in her possession a large purse of gold, which she had endeavoured in vain to conceal; but finding she could not, declared it was given her by the baron. 'The next mornin,' added the woman, 'I waited upon her to call her to breakfast; but she was not to be found. When I entered the chamber, I saw that part of the bedclothes were taken from the bed, and, going to the window, I discovered the sheets tied together, and made fast to the iron bar belonging to the casement. It then occurred to me, that she had made her escape in the night; and, recollecting the money I had seen in her possession, I hastened to my lord, and, with tears in my eyes, informed him of the lady's departure, and my fears that she had robbed him, which indeed I found were true. I have since learned,' continued the old woman, 'that the naughty lady was seen passing through Danbury early in the morning, in company with'—'Hold, said I, 'there is certainly some inexplicable mystery in this transaction.' I then desired the woman to give me a description of the lady; and, without the least hesitation, she described the person of my dear Emma so minutely and so accurately, that I was struck with astonishment.

"Gaston, seeing my agitation, desired the woman to withdraw, and resumed his speech to this effect: 'You see, I have not deceived you; I have been the sufferer in this business, and let me tell you, cousin, you might have spared much of the harsh language that has passed, had you possessed patience enough to have waited for a proper investigation of the fact.' 'You say,' returned I, 'that she has robbed you; the accusation militates against reason: she could have had no incentive to commit so foul a fact.'

The monies due to her;—her mother's jointure, and the estates to which she is heiress, must have afforded her an ample supply; and of these no man knows the value better than you.' 'What talk you,' said he, 'of monies due, of jointures, and estates? You are not, it seems, aware how much your father's affairs were embarrassed.' 'I cannot be ignorant of that,' answered I, hastily; 'but I know also, with equal certainty, that if they have been managed with the same justice by you that they were in my honoured uncle's lifetime, the incumbrances are nearly, or altogether, done away.' 'Yes,' retorted he, with a sarcastic grin, 'and so your sister said, and made large claims; but God help me, I have not the property in hand to answer them; and, believe me, my cousin, you will find yourself mistaken. The whole of your patrimony has been mortgaged for larger sums than it now is valued at, and the interest has accumulated beyond all due proportion. Money was also necessary for the repairs, which my father paid from time to time, without obtaining any set-off; because the draughts for cash from his brother were so large, and his importunities so pressing. Since my father's death, I have been obliged to submit to the foreclosure of the mortgage upon your mother's jointure, or I should have been ruined by his generosity.' 'Ruined!' cried I; 'you speak of things impossible. Exclusive of the jointure and the family estates which are sequestered to the crown, my father had made several private purchases, which were given over to my uncle, in trust, for my dear Emma and myself. What has become of them?' 'Why, there it is,' continued he, 'gadfish, I do not seek my own advantage, but as justice allows me fairly, they are sold.' 'Without our concurrence?' said I, 'that cannot be.' He answered: 'Therein you mistake. We had full power of sale; and I was obliged to exert that power, or be myself a beggar. In such case, I trow, neither you, nor your dear sister, would have supported me.' 'I cannot comprehend you,' said I; 'be more explicit, I beseech you, if you expect me to be patient.' 'Go to, now,' quoth he, 'you are so violent, there is no reasoning with you; your sister was the same. I received her affectionately, and welcomed her to my humble dwelling, and to my humble fire; for I am obliged to suit my expenses to my income, and submit to hard living in order to live out of debt.' 'Well, and what then?' cried I, hastily. 'What then?' answered he; 'Why, then, I wish every one would do the same. But, truly, I have found my slender board is all suited to high stomachs. My economy is condemned, my person slighted, and my advice laughed at.' 'And who condemns your economy, who slighted your person, who laughs at your advice?' said I. 'And is it handsome,' answered he, 'to hear one's words repeated, parrot-like? Go to, I will show you the mortgages I spoke of, and the deeds of sale you doubt the truth of, and you shall be convinced. Your own eyes shall convince you, that I have been your friend, and a friend to your family. Your warmth of temper I am willing to overlook; it is a family failing. Your father possessed the same; but unfortunately for you all, it was his ruin.' 'Spare your comments, Gaston,' said I, 'and speak to the point.' 'Then, to the point I will speak,' quoth he, 'and the point is this: you stand indebted to me two thousand crowns; (seeing I was much agitated, he went on.) I have stated it at the lowest calculation, and am willing to acquit you of the whole. And, gad my life, if you will but hear me, for your mother, my aunt's sake, I am inclined to go forward as your friend, and lend you a trifle; for the

fortunate for me, it is but a trifle that I can spare. I would advise you to go abroad, and serve your king and your country, as a man of courage ought to do; for I perceive you to be a man of courage, and what better road to fortune and preferment can be chosen by a gentleman of reduced circumstances, than that of a soldier, setting aside the glory that valour may acquire. In this case, I say, I will lend you sufficient to purchase you an apprenticeship, and to set open the door to future wealth and honour.'

"I could hear him no further, and thought I had several other important questions to put to him, this last insult provoked me beyond endurance, 'Fore Heaven,' cried I, 'thou art a wretch without a mind, a vile, a miserable reptile. As God's my judge, I am to blame to hold converse with thee. But I will find my persecuted sister. Wronged as she is, she shall confront thee to thy confusion. And for these deeds, these mortgages, they shall be examined by those who will make thee tremble worse than I have done. I am not without friends, and powerful ones, and, if I were, thou pitiful disgrace to the name of manhood! I would not apply to such a thing as thou art for assistance.' So saying, I cast my mantle over my shoulders, and, without waiting for his reply, hurried away, as though I had been flying from an infection; I mounted my horse, which I had left in the outer court, and rode back to the inn.

"Thus, my lord," added Saint Clerc, addressing himself to the baron, "I have given you the substance of what passed at the interview between Gaston and myself. I am well aware that the impetuosity of my temper laid me open to the censures of my cousin; but I must have been as inanimate as a statue of marble to have heard, unmoved, such vile and inconsistent accusations brought forward against my dearest relative."

"I see no need of apology, my good friend," said Lord Boteler; "falsehood and duplicity ought to be treated with contempt. I beseech you continue your history."

Saint Clerc bowed his head, and went on:—"While my servants were preparing for our departure, I entered a second time into conversation with the host at the Griffin, for that was the sign of the inn where we stopped, and I questioned him respecting a young lady, who had been at Gay Bowers some months back, and what reports were circulated concerning her. He replied, 'That he knew but very little of the matter; a young lady certainly was there, who passed for a relation of the baron's, exceedingly beautiful, and amiable in her deportment when she appeared in public, but said to be very loose and dissipated in her private manners. After she had resided at Gay Bowers some short time, she departed thence clandestinely, and, according to report, took with her more than properly belonged to her. I saw her pass my door, on the morning she made her escape; and, as God shall judge me, she looked more like an angel, than like a bad woman.' 'Did she seem to be elevated with joy, or depressed with sorrow?' said I. 'Like one,' quoth the host, 'forsaken of her friends, for her veil blowing aside, as she went by, discovered the sweetest face I ever saw, and her eyes were full of tears, and her looks so modest and innocent, that I cannot help thinking she has been falsely accused.' 'But the young fellow who was with her?' 'Indeed, good sir,' quoth he, 'I saw no one with her. His lordship's steward circulated that report; but, by the holy rood, I do not believe it.' 'No doubt, it was false,' said I, 'and so, I trust, was all the rest; but tell me, I pray you, which way did she go?' 'Towards Sandon,' added

her; but I was told by one who passed her upon Elmgreen, that she inquired from him the readiest way to Chelmsford, and since that time I have not heard of her.' 'Holy saints!' cried I, in an agony of grief, 'where was then your protecting power? Forsaken innocent, you must be found!'

"The host, alarmed at my ejaculation, started back, and said, 'You know her, then?' 'Yes,' said I, 'and do you think you should remember her again?' 'I am certain,' replied he, 'I should.' 'Then,' said I, 'go instantly to Chelmsford, use every diligence to inquire her out, and, if you should be successful, tell her her troubles are at an end, for at Foleshant Darcy she may find her brother.' 'Her brother, sir?' said the host. 'Her dear, her affectionate brother,' said I; and at the same time put a purse of gold into his hands, adding, 'spare no expense, and two of my servants shall go with you, and give you every necessary assistance.'

"The host promised faithfully to perform his commission. I caused two of my retinue to remain behind me, and pleasing myself with the hope that her residence might be traced out, I set forward towards Maldon, and, passing through that town, came to the mansion of the Darcys early in the afternoon.

"The next day, according to the king's orders, a court was held by the justiciaries for the county, and I was reinstated in the honours and emoluments which had formerly belonged to our family.

"The news of my good fortune was presently known at Gay Bowers; and Gaston, well assured that I would use the utmost of my power to develop his villainous proceedings, endeavoured, by a change of conduct, as mean and servile as his former deportment had been sarcastic and overbearing, to disarm my vengeance, and sent me a conciliatory epistle, couched in the following terms:—

'DEAR COUSIN,

'I take the earliest opportunity to congratulate you upon your successful resumption of the family estates and residence, to which you are in justice the true heir; and, believe me, no one rejoices more than I do at hearing of your welfare. I cannot mention, without feeling the most poignant regret, the unfortunate misunderstanding which took place between us, when you did me the honour of visiting me at Gay Bowers. I shall beg of you to permit me to see you again, at any time you may think proper to appoint for that purpose, when a fair investigation of the papers and proceedings, relative to the monies due upon the several estates committed to my care, shall be laid before you. A little consideration, I doubt not, my dear cousin, will convince you, that a mutual disadvantage must arise to us, by embroiling ourselves in a tedious and uncertain lawsuit. On my own part, I wish for justice only. I find, on a review of the papers, that some misstatements have been made; but those I am ready to rectify, and, I trust, to your satisfaction. I have also reason to believe, that the misconduct of the lady, your sister, has been exaggerated. I have been deceived, and shall think it my duty to make every amenda that are within my power. From your most affectionate cousin,

'GASTON SAINT CLERE.'

"This letter was delivered to me while I sat at table with the court officers. I cast my eyes over it, and when I saw from whom it came, I gave it to my secretary for him to copy it; and when dinner was over, I caused it to be resolded, and gave it again

into the hands of the messenger, desiring him to inform his master, that I would employ a person proper for the purpose to answer that letter.

"The servants I had sent with the innkeeper from Danbury to Chelmsford, followed me to Foleshant Darcy two days after. They assured me, that every possible inquiry had been made after the lady described by the innkeeper, but to no purpose. She was seen at Sandon and at Chelmsford the same day; but they were not able to trace their information any further.

"This unwelcome intelligence prevented my staying any longer at Foleshant Darcy; for I had no enjoyment of my new acquirements, without the participation of my Emma. I therefore resolved to seek for her among all the friends and distant relations of both our families, wherever I could find them, in hopes she might have sought an asylum with some one of them; but my researches were in vain, and continual disappointments made me completely miserable. I began to suspect that Gaston had been wicked enough to add murder to his other atrocities, and was resolved to cite him to trial, upon an indictment for that crime; but the judge-advocate advised me to be very circumspect in preferring a charge of that kind against a peer, except upon very certain grounds; because I might thereby incur the censure of the court, and subject myself to much inconvenience. I have, however, proceeded against him for the recovery of our property, and cast him in several expensive suits.

"The cause respecting our mother's jointure is upon the eve of determination; and your presence, my dear Emma, will be of service. This, as well as those that have preceded it, my counsel assures me, cannot fail of being decided in our favour."

Here Lord Darcy bowed to the company, and concluded his narrative. Leaving the audience to their expressions of wonder and congratulation at the change of Saint Clare's fortune, we return to the inferior persons of our story.

CHAPTER XX.

Good eating and drinking, with gentle exercise, in a week or two restored Ralph, not only to his proper senses, but also to his bodily strength. When having attempted a fall with several of his pot companions, for practice sake, and proved successful, he determined to wreak his vengeance upon the baron's jester. Ralph was not scholar enough to write, but applied to Thomas, the reeve's son, to pen a letter for him. Thomas readily undertook the performance, and between them the following epistle was produced:

"Good mister fool, or good mister knave, or both, as you shall like it.—I Ralph, the tasker, arde you to remember the wileful gibes and lewd japings you cast upon me, when held in durance by the craft of Cuthbert the barber; and hereby I do declare you to be a false faytor, and a recreant lurdane, and defy you to mortal combat. Moreover, I hest you to forsay the love of Margery, my bonnebell, or I'll so tan your scurvy hide, that Sim Glover, her father, shall take it for a jerkin of leather. Answer this in fair guise, or I will rap the handle of my large Sheffield thwittle over your knave's custard, whenever I may meet you."

This letter was superscribed—"To Gregory Jester, the baron's fool."

Thomas took upon him to convey the challenge to Gregory, and delivered it to him, in the presence of the superior domestics, while they were sitting at dinner. Gregory not being able to read it with facility, craved assistance from Thomas; "for certes," said he, "my eyes be somewhat weak; besides, I have no glasses, and here be certain selcouth words, I can not well." He then reached the epistle to Thomas, who, winking to his comrades, read the whole of it aloud, and then addressing himself to the jester, saying, "By the good rood of Daynam; this churl bayeth full loudly, and weens to appal us by his craking; but his doughtyness must be availed; say you not so, friend Gregory?"

"Say, indeed," replied the jester, "what should I say to such a jottornol? And wit ye not, the churl is besides his wits? And would you have me hold parley with a madman?"

"Certes, you do him wrong," said Thomas; "his wits are well enough at ease, and the knave is sound, wind and limb, which makes him so haughty; but herein, if I misween not, your honour stands at the stake for the ban-dog to bay at; for honour's sake, ye are bound to answer the challenge."

"By the devil and his dam, I will answer no challenge," cried Gregory; "ween ye that I be wode, or that my wits are shell-bound? Is it befitting for a person of my elevation to take note of such a dung-hill weed?"

"Tush, man," quoth Thomas, "it will not serve thy turn, at this stound, to cry craven, sithence it were a shame to us all for this dersaignement to be overpassed without reply. How say you, my lusty compeers; shall we permit a hinderlin to sit at board with us, and brand us with the name of cowards?"

"No, Thomas," cried they all; "if the jester refuses to fight, he shall not sit at our board; but let him take his commons with the scullions and turn-spits."

"Why brawl ye thus, my masters?" said the page Gervice; "well did I wet, and oft have told ye the same, he is a lozel knave, doughty only in impudence; for his wit is as edgeless as Sampson's anvil, and can only serve him to frisk and gambol, like a fool, as he is, on a May-day mummery, when he boasts of practising his paces, his galloping, curvettings, trottings, and amblings, with his Canterbury canters, kickings, roarings, and whinings, or prates of holding his tight rein, his loose rein, with his kirbs, and his snaffles, and his bells. I have no patience to hear him, nor with those who encourage such idle fooleries. But now the heartless sot is called upon to demean himself as a man, he is sore aghast, like a chattering pie caught in the trammels."

"Go to, fellow page," said Fabian; "you are too severe upon our joke-cracker; by the lord of Lincoln, I have seen you giggle, and throw your bonnet in the air, for pleasure, at witnessing his vagaries; and well I ween, Gregory shall not be found to lack lusthhood, but will fight, like a dragoon, when occasion calls."

"Why, what a coil ye keep," quoth Gregory, "japing and bording. Do ye hold me to be such a dolt as to take a Jenny howlet for a Tassel gentle, or to turn your idle merriment into an earnest game?"

"There went the hare away; the fool is wise for once," cried Gervice, "and will save his coxcomb. If he veilt not his bonnet, by Paul's bell, the tasker will thrash him into stubble; but well I weened he would not fight."

"How! not fight?" quoth Cecil, the butler; "by

the martyr of Kent, if he quell not this earl, I'll pass his horn over, and it shall be filled with the washings of the pottle-pots!"

"He shall fight," said Gilbert, the carver, "or I will brittle his ears for him, and send him to Jeukin, the bearward, to carry garbage to the brutes."

"Why, look you," said Parker, the deerkeeper, "by this broad fletch, which has pierced the side of many a fat buck, we will all be on his party; and he shall have a shield, a lance, and armour of proof, with a bassinet of steel, and a curta! axe."

"And his brand," said Peretto, the minstrel, "shall be a trusty one, equal to that high morgay, with which King Arthur, the mirror of knighthood, and sovereign of the Round-table, quelled the dragon in the fens of Esséx."

"Stint your clamour," cried Gregory, "for ye were born in a mill, I trow, your clacks be so loud; but the brawling is to no purpose, I wet well, there is nothing soothlike in your areeds."

"By the mass, but you will find them to be full sooth," said Thomas, "and you must fight, or quit our board."

Here he appealed to his comrades, when one and all assured the jester that there was no alternative. This decision made him quake with fear, and the rev's son, to raise his spirits, represented to him the unskilfulness of his antagonist. "He is a seely earl," said he, "who never wielded a sword, nor bore a shield, nor chopped at a pell, nor broke a lance on a wedding-day, by tilting at a quintain; he is a very flail-swingier, and wots not the handling of war weapons; besides, we will all be at hand to abet and save you in case of danger."

In short the jester was so sharply pressed upon by them, that contrary to his inclination, he was obliged to comply. And in the first place, it was deemed necessary to return an answer of defiance suitable to the challenge. Thomas was pitched upon as the scribe, and after some consultation, the following retort was committed to writing:—

"Mister Flail-swingier, in order to arseed your eburiship better portauence, and correct your diction, when you presume to address your betters, I, Gregory Jester, at this stound will degrade my rank a while, and condescend to chastise ye at your own requiring; I will send thee back like a base hilding to thy friend Cuthbert, who shall shave thee anew and make thee as tame as Jenkins does his lordship's bears and jackanapes; and sithence you pollute, with vulgar lips, the name of Margery, my dearest leman, and the fairest flower of the prime, I will make thee forego all pretensions to her love, or carven your knave's pelt into flail thongs."

This counter-challenge was addressed to Ralph Everid, the cornthrasher; and Thomas undertook to deliver the same to the tasker; "but," said he, "if I can make up this affray withouten blood-shedding—"

"Do so, dear Thomas," interrupted the jester, hastily; "for the mercy of the blessed Mary Virgin, do so; ye well wot this brawling is unseemly, and by the young Saint Hugh of Lincoln, slain by the cursed Jews, I have no mind to detinge the earth with the knave's blood."

"Marry, may the holy saints forefend," quoth Thomas, "that human blood should be yashed in wantonness! and ne living wight would outstep me to impeach a mortal combat; but ye are well avised, this same tasker is a wilful churl, as cheleric as a dragon, and as implacable as a fiend. What wist ye, my comrades; I was told the other day, somme eight years back, this earl was in service at Esse-

Barnet, and in a foul bickerment, he slew a stout man, and a bold one, with a single blow of his fist, algates his antagonist was armed with a double-edged glaive, and a hand-buckler."

"The de-e-e-vil he did," exclaimed Gregory, trembling with affright; "why then you may fight him yourself for me, I will not face such a fire-drake."

"Not face him!" answered Thomas, "but in sooth you shall, and that ofsoons, for honour's sake. For wot ye well, the wight he siew had not the vantage of defensive armour, nor such stout hearts as we, to beteme him from misfare."

"Say no more about it," quoth Parker, "Gregory shall fight; and by my best bugle tipped with silver, I had lever my bow-string should snap in twain, when I point at a fair mark, than our comrade should be yshent, for that would be a disgrace to all serving-men for an age to come."

"Certes, all this is very fine talkin'," said Gregory.

"To be sure, man," replied Peter Lanaset, "if he bates, you shall reclaim him; I warrant the hawk will prove a hagard; fear not, for we be all with you."

"And for my part," said Thomas, "I will wend awy, and seek out this swaggering swashbuckler."

"But I beseech you," cried Gregory, "by the holy mass, to make us friends. In sooth, I owe the churl no maltaul. In good sooth, I have no grudge at heart against him."

"Certes," answered Thomas, "I would speak him fair, but he is such a wayward churl, and wilful as a mule. Gentle spechs, and well beseech courtesy, like crusts to curst cur, would only make him brawl the louder. But my hearts, this is a fair tide; his lordship is from home, and there is nothing to lep us in the way. Gregory, like a tall man, is as choleric as the Prior's bull at Tredbury, and we will have this notable emprise atchived before sunsetting."

The close of this oration was received with a general sheet of applause, when Gregory stamped with his foot and vociferated, "Ye are all mad! By the hallowed rood, ye are possessed! The devil himself has gained the mastery over your wits! Thomas, you are a false knave to say I am choleric; I will not fight this afternoon; I am not in the trim for fighting, nor shall a mother's son among you play his stales on me; nor make me fight till I am choleric."

"Certes then, there is not a mother's son shall make you fight hastily," said Gervise, "for I will gage large odds you will not be choleric atween this tide and Martlemass."

"Have at you, Mister Page," retorted Cecil, "there is my hand, and I will wager a dozen potles of spiced wine to a silver cross, Gregory shall be ofsoons forthcoming, and shall mow down this roarer like a thistle stem with one flourish of his broad-iron. What, man! I will have him into the pantry, and he shall take a full horn of sound clary, or two, so need it, and make him rageful as a lion; then I rede the earl to say his paternoster, and prepare his sprite for purgatory."

Thomas took this opportunity to slip out of the hall unseen by the jester, who followed Cecil; and having swallowed a large capful of wine, began to talk more loudly. Fabian undertook to arm him; but before he was invested with the habiliments of war, he desired to have a few minutes' conversation in private with the page, and Cecil, to accommodate him, withdrew. "Look you now, Fabian," said he,

"here is half an angel of gold, and it shall be thine, so be it you will do me a service."

"Give me but the coin," cried Fabian, "and conclude the service done; softly and fairly will farthest go."

"I ween, my brave page," quoth the jester, withdrawing his hand, "it is well fitting you should first learn what the service may be. You and I are nearly paregal in size, and well I wot, ye may pass for me when cased in armour, and have the vizor of your bassinet drawn over your face; now I will give you this piece of gold to guise yourself, and take in hand this achievement on my behalf. Certes, you are a doughty man, and apt at the use of arms; so that, without let, ye may weightly prove your puissance upon this craking lozel; but as for me, so may the holy saints defend me! I have no jeyance in such bickerments."

"As I hope for the honour of knighthood," replied Fabian, "I heed not the churl, and would fight him with all my heart to serve you, but the deed stands not in possibility. Our comrade expect to see you armed in their presence, and I, who have not yet arrived at the degree of an esquire, am forbidden by the laws of chivalry to close the beaver of my bassinet."

Cecil now returned, and his comrades began to be clamorous for Gregory to come forth and be armed, when the poor jester, perceiving that nothing but his compliance would appease them, went into the hall, and requested of Fabian to search for the strongest gambeson, and the page brought him one of double fustian, stopped with silk, and quilted with threads of gold.

"This gambeson," said Fabian, "whilom belonged to Gilbert Lord Boteler, one of the proudest knights that accompanied Richard Coeur de Lion to the Holy Land, and its skirts, as ye see, are stained with the blood of a Saracen giant, slain by him in single combat."

With this gambeson was the jester invested. Over it was placed an haubergeon of double mail, with a chaperon of mail. The avautails being fastened on either side of his neck, a bassinet of steel, without a vizor, was put upon his head, and laced beneath the chin. The breeches of mail were drawn over his legs and thighs, but he complained they were too weighty, for which reason his thighs were protected by cuishes, and his legs by greaves of plate armour: a round shield, embossed with brass, was fitted to his left arm, and a sword of excellent temper suspended from his girdle. In this equipment Gervise maliciously observed, that he resembled a grey hawkeye in a bosket of ivy.

A wooden pell was then set up in the outer court the height of a man, and the distances marked upon it for the legs, the thighs, the body, neck, and head. Gregory was made to strike at this post with his sword as if it had been his enemy, sometimes aiming his blows at the head, then at the body, and again at the neck, or the thighs, or the legs, his comrades calling out continually to encourage him, or to advise him where to strike.

While he was thus performing the exercise of a bachelor at arms, a horn was blown at the gate, which being opened, a messenger entered, and summoned the jester to the place of combat, where the challenger was waiting for him. This information made Gregory tremble, and relinquishing his employment, he inquired if the tasker was equipped in armour. Being answered in the ne-

gative, he assumed something like an air of courage, and haughtily demanded what arms he had taken upon him for to use?

"A small hand-shield," said the messenger, "and a huge flail."

At this answer, Gregory's comrades laughed aloud; which somewhat angered the messenger, and he replied—"Pardy, I arede you to foresay your merriment; this choice of arms is not unwillingly made, for these be weapons Ralph can handle skilfully. By the holy rood, he whiska his flail about with such craft, that the prowest of you all may not approach him without endangerment of his bones. It little boots your champion, lozel-like, to be chopping at that stick: I warrant, if he comes within ten yards of the tasker, he will dear aby his daring, for Ralph will bring him down, with a single blow, as he broke the gate-post even now upon the green."

"Go then," cried Gregory, "and tell the savage, I will not come; he shall be bound over to the peace by his lordship's bailie."

"Twere better so," replied the messenger, smiling; "so be you are not resolved to visit purgatory before the moon be up."

"Not go!" exclaimed his comrades with one voice. "By the blood of St. Thomas of Kent, you shall not eat, nor drink, nor sit with us, for aye, if you cry craven at this stound," and so saying, they seized him; some fastening upon one arm, and some upon the other, and drew him forward notwithstanding he resisted with all his might, and roared as though they had been dragging him to the slaughter.

"Stifit your clamour, you heartless hilding!" said Gervise; "for, will ye or nill ye, by the dragoon of St. George, you shall go!" With that he ran into the hall, and returning with a demy-lance, began goading the hinder parts of the jester's legs, between the ligatures of the greaves, and made him wince and frisk with more alacrity than the prancings of his favourite hobby-horse required; when finding all resistance was in vain, and that no possibility of escaping remained, he begged to be released from his uneasy situation, and promised to go with them without any farther compulsion.

When they came to the green (the place appointed for the combat,) they found Ralph leathen upon his flail, and waiting the approach of his antagonist. He was very whimsically harnessed for the fight. His body was covered with a thick quilted purpoint stuffed with tow, having no sleeves, but the bases were long, and reached to the middle of his thighs; over this he wore a tunic of canvass. His head was covered with a strong cap of leather, fastened beneath the chin; and, upon the top, by way of crest, was set upright a peacock's feather. He had no other defensive armour, excepting a small round shield, embellished with knobs of brass; his offensive weapon, as we have heard before, was a trusty ashen flail; but he had also a reaping hook stuck in his girdle, in the place of a dagger.

The moment he saw Gregory, he swung the flail around his head with a flourish of defiance, and heaped up to the jester like a terrible giant, wielding a huge mace of iron; when, giving up all for lost, he stopped short, and crossed himself. He was proceeding also to repeat a paternoster, but Gervise, with a prick of the lance, disturbed his devotion, and obliged him to go forwards.

When the jester entered the circle, the partisans of the tasker, with one voice, objected to the body-armour worn by him. On the other hand, Thomas asserted, that as Gregory was the party challenged, he had, by the established laws of chivalry, the privilege of chusing his arms, offensive or defensive; "and so it is expressly declared, in the great book of knighthood and battle in his lordship's library, where he of you who can, may read it; and Ralph," said he, "if so he list, may be yclad in like guise. But if he demean his own prowess paregal to plate or mail, and chuse to fight in his shirt and breech only, who shall say him nay? he does it at his own peril."

Another objection was then started by Hugh, the carrier, who happened to be present, and asserted, that it was not lawful for any man, beneath the rank of an esquire, to wear mail armour, or helm himself with a bassinet; and declared, that he had received this information from a pursuivant-at-arms at London, when the last great justing was held in that city. Thomas, in reply, contended, that the hauberk, a coat of mail, with sleeves of the same, and helmets with vizors, were the only pieces of armour prohibited by the laws of chivalry, because they belonged to the knights; but the haubergeon, a sleeveless coat of mail, and the bassinet without a vizor, might be used by the esquires, and pages, or by any one who could procure them; and referred, for his authority, to the great book before mentioned.

Several other difficulties would have been started, had not Ralph himself interferred; who, being tired of this useless contest, declared he was ready to abide the combat equipped as he was, without fearing the butterfly, or heeding the advantage of his armour. This mark of his courage excited applause from both parties; and they proceeded instantly to measure out the ground, and set up props for the boundaries. The combatants were then adjured to speak the truth, and declare, whether or not they came fairly into the field, without charm, spell, or amulet, or the assistance of witchcraft, or any other diabolical practice for the obtainment of the victory? These ceremonies being concluded, the lists were cleared, and the champions were left to their own achievement.

Gregory's friends persuaded him to brandish his sword, and put himself into a proper posture of defence, in order to intimidate his antagonist, which he did with much appearance of fury, so that Ralph was startled for a moment; but the clamour of his comrades, who encouraged him to advance with intrepidity, and secure the first blow, soon recalled his courage, when whirling his flail above his head, he made it whistle in the air, and set forward towards the jester, who fell back in proportion as Ralph approached him, till he came to the extremity of the lists, when, dropping the point of his sword to the ground, he called upon his antagonist to stop, and hear him speak a few words.

"Let thy prating be brief then, my gaudy coxcomb," quoth Ralph, "for I be not in the humour for talking."

"Moderate thy fury albeit for a moment," said the jester, faltering. "There is time now, I ween, for us to slayen one another, if malice require such a sanguinary achievement; but, in the name of Him who suffered dole for us, why should we lust for each other's blood, or put ourselves to

mortal peril, to afford despot for these guileful losers, who are assembled to make merriment at our scath. Certes, man, I will take oath upon the vangis, I owe you no maltaient; and, if I should paravaunt be your death's man (as what shall let me, if you be wilful,) I shall be a wode man for aye, and lost in deriment."

" Pardie, you be reckoning without the host," quoth the tasker, surly; " if you demean this fine preachment shall pay the score, or hold me for so sorry a clown that I cannot discern between cockle and clean corn; for, in sooth, if I misween not, my faiil and your knaveship's sconce shall be better acquainted anon."

" You are so chaffed with anger, friend Ralph, by the guileful workings of these false traitors," answered Gregory, " that you will not sickly cast the reckoning. By the holy mass-rood, I am right grieved for the maltreatment you have undespassed; and am pressed to be friends with you withouten bickerment; and so may our blessed Lady help me, as I will foresay any wrong that I have done!"

" Mark's me," cried Ralph, interrupting him; " thou art a prattling coxcomb, an' insolent, cowardly gulf! but I have not forgotten thy lewd pricings, and thy vapouring bragments, when this knavish barber had bound my hands. I then promised, what I now ween well to appay; that is, a sound thrashing!"—so saying, he elevated his faiil, and Gregory's comrades perceiving that he was retreating beyond the boundaries, called upon him to advance, and Ralph drew back a few yards to give him a fair opportunity of so doing; which the jester not readily embracing, his tormentor, the page, came behind him, and goading him sharply on the calve of one of his legs, obliged him to spring forward on a sudden, which Ralph taking as a signal for engagement, gave him a blow on the side of the bassinet, which made him stagger; and as imminent danger often makes cowards courageous, so Gregory, having no hope of escaping death but by exerting himself, rushed towards his foe; who was preparing to strike him a secon' time, and smiting him with great fury at the tasker's head, had probably put an end to the contest in a tragical manner, but Ralph couring down avoided the fall' force; part, however, of his skull-esp was cut away, and the peacock's feather along with it. Ralph, recovering himself, struck again at the jester, but he leaping aside, the faiil glanced only upon his hip, without much hurting him; on the other hand, Gregory seeing his enemy had overreached himself, took the advantage to assault him again. Ralph attempted to parry the stroke of the sword with his hand-shield; but, not holding it firmly, it twisted from his grasp, and he was slightly wounded in the arm. The sight of his own blood redoubled his fury; he threw away the shield with a haughty air, and grasping the faiil with both his hands, struck the jester with so much vigour upon his right arm, that he dropped his sword to the ground, upon which Ralph set his foot, and the disarmed jester turned about to fly, when his enraged enemy, taking him at default, struck him a second time upon the head, and brought him to the ground; now had his chastisement ended here, but both parties interposed at once in favour of the unfortunate champion, and rescued him from the vengeance of the enraged conqueror.

The jester's comrades/foes/and friends turned by the

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blow he had received; and, from the effusion of blood, they judged him to have been dangerously hurt. They hastily unlaced his bassinet, and drawing off the hood of mail, they discovered a large contusion near the left temple, whence the blood flowed copiously, which heightened the ghastly appearance of his pale, lank visage, and frightened Ralph, whose good-nature had now regained the ascendancy over his resentment. He was heartily sorry he had not listened in time to the peaceful overtures held out by his antagonist, and verily believed he had been unfortunate enough to kill his foeman; but, after being sluiced with cold water, and having the wound well-washed and bound up, the jester recovered his senses, and Ralph danced about the green for joy. Gregory owned that Ralph was the conqueror; and both of them shook hands in a friendly manner, and promised not to remember any thing that had passed with the least animosity.

Gregory, assisted by two of his comrades, retired from the field of combat, to have his wound dressed by the baron's leech; and the fortunate champion caused his leathern helmet to be unlaced, and having disengaged himself from the gauntlet, he bound a keshief over his wounded arm to stop the bleeding, and put on his super-tunic, when his companions having placed a large garland of oak leaves upon his head, hoisted him upon their shoulders, and bore him away in triumph, and the shield of his antagonist reversed was carried before him, agreeably to ancient custom.

In their way to Hob Filcher's (for thither they were taking him,) the procession passed by Sir Glover's house, and curiosity called Margery, who heard the shouting, to the gate. The first thing that struck her eye was Ralph triumphant, having his brow amply adorned with the token of his victory; and the moment our hero saw this fair mistress, he leaped from his comrades' shoulders, and ran to her, where, making first a fair obeysance, he spake as follows:—

" I wot not well, fair Mistress Margery, in what way you may entartake the same at my hands, but, certes, I have awarded to his lordship's silken fool a fair guerdon."

From this address the damsæl readily understood that a battle had taken place between Ralph and Gregory. It also plainly appeared, that the former was the conqueror; and though she really was not sorry fortune had declared herself in favour of the tasker, yet she did not altogether approve of the manner in which he announced the victory; and for that reason pottably replied: " If his lordship's fool, and you, goodman Shallow-wit, are such gulls as to fall together by the ears, or try the stoutness of your panakels against each other like mad bats, areed me, I prithie, what concern have I in what may betide you? certes, I see none."

" Have you then no sauvenance," said Ralph, " how I was delivered over to the wicked barbs, nor how this vapouring jape cracker was brought to worry me like a bear in my vile durance? By the three kings of Cullaine, methinks you might have remembered that foul foolery!"

" Soothly to say," replied Margery, " I am not at this a stound unmisfeul of one: matter you have set forth, and well I wot it were all your own seeking: I was beguiled; for, certes, I deserved

you to be a true man, who loved me well, and not a churlish treacher, hand and gauntlet, with a chris-cross-row lurdane, to misprise my gentle portraunce, and overclaw my good-nature; but may our blessed Lady so help me in day of dome, as I wish for occasion to spring that letter-cooning woodcock, Mister Thomas, and make him dance a-fit to the measure I would set for him."

"Your smiles, my pretty lass," said Thomas, who overheard her, "may lead me any where; but, certes, these frowns sit very evilly upon your fair countenance. Had I a mirror to reflect them, you would be convinced, and forego them for aye. I am right sorry my intendments failed in the performance; nathless I must say, they were advised for the best."

"And I," retorted Margery, "should hold it best for your knaveship's heels to kiss the stocks; a fair guerdon, in my awardment, for your self-counselling."

"In sooth, my lovely eyes-dropper," answered Thomas, smiling, "your doom is somewhat harsh. Sithence, all would have gone aright, had not you played a shrewd trick upon us; for, certes, we wist not you was so near the window."

Here Ralph interfered, saying, "Look you now, what is done cannot be fordone; and I hope, Margery, ye deem me to have been full appayed for my falsing. Give me your hand in a friendly way; for, as I hope for Paradise, I have none ill will, nor do I love you a whit the less sickerly for all this bickernent."

"I will cry truce, with all my heart," replied Margery, presenting her fair hand to the tasker, which he received in his, and pressed to his lips again and again.

"Fie, now, you are so foolish, Ralph!" cried the damsel, blushing; and having, by a faint struggle or two, withdrawn her hand, she smiled, and, bidding him good even, ran into the house and shut the door.

Ralph was then remounted upon his comrades' shoulders, and the procession arrived in safety at the Crown.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Tale at the Ale.

At the threshold of Hob Filcher's door the victorious combatant met his friend Sim Glover, the fair Margery's father, who took him very cordially by the hand, saying, "I wist not that the old grudge 'twixt you and his honour's jester would have been abroad with so much bickernent. I shall not twiten thee for thy hardiment, but am right glad you have made him cry craven. Algates, had I been avised o' the matter beforehand, I would ha' assayed to put a spoke in the wheel."

"The affray is all over," said Ralph; "and I thank you for your good weeten. Yet, because I owed the knave a broken coxcomb, I should have been ill at ease to have let him wend away without his due. But, hark o' me, I have had speech with Margery, and wot ye well, we have shaken hands, and she is my bonnibell again; for, by my hal-dam, I love the wench, algates she be so wilful; and if dame and you be

as willing as I, we will be nearer related before another moon."

"In good time, Ralph," quoth Sim; "dame and I have coaned this lesson over before now. You have our liking; win but the girl to say aye, and we will not keep you from the church door."

"By the blood, but it is well said on both sides," cried the host; "Gad's bones, Ralph has demeaned himself like a tall man, and a true. He showed his darcindo without grudging, and bears no malice after; but, by the bones, I am main glad your bickerings are at an end. You be all my customers, and peace and lusthod brings most grists to my mill. Come, come, walk in, my jolly hearts! here's house-room at your service; tell me what you will call for. If you talk of my ale, adad you shall wend far away before you find its equal. It is true March huffcap, and, like the Philistines' foxes, carries fire in its tail."

The company took their seats in Hob's summer-room; and the first stoup of ale had scarcely gone round, when they were joined by an elderly man, who was a stranger to them all. His dress was a long dark-coloured frock, resembling that of a friar, and his hood was drawn up over his head. He inquired of the host, if he might be accommodated there with lodging for the night; and being answered in the affirmative, he addressed himself to the assembly, in these words:—

"I am, so please you, my gentle masters, a dis-sour; and that you may well wean me not to be of the common sort, I shall arede you before hand, that I belong to Janino's celebrated company of minstrels, who are now with the king at St. Alban's, whither I am going to join them; but being, as you see, somewhat aged, I cannot travel so swiftly as afore times I was wont to do; and fearing to be belated before I can reach Hatfield, and right well tired also, I am desirous of abiding here this night; and, if you be disposed for joyance, collect among you money enough to pay for my harbouring, and reasonable refreshment, and I will rehearse a fit of mirth, well worthy the meed of three golden angels."

The rustics readily raised a contribution sufficient for the purpose, and Hob Filcher, of his own accord, swore by the mass-bell he would lodge him like a knight of price, without charging him a single cross, if the story was to his gree.

The old man put the donations he had received into his gisire, and requesting Hob Filcher not to forget his promise, related the following tale, singing the songs to appropriate tunes, accompanying his voice to the music of a gittern, which he bore with him.

THE DISSOUR'S TALE.

"Whilom, as old records tellen us, on a night, at Christmas tide, when the north-east wind blew sore, and the snow lay deep upon the ground, two travelling priests were belated on their way to Oxford city.

"At the time it began to be dark, they came to the gate of a small priory, where they knocked, and begged harbour for God's sake. The porter seeing their gowns wrapped about them, and their hoods ydrawn over their faces, weened them to be minstrels, or jugglers, and right glad were the friars of their coming; for they counted upon seeing some mirthful pastime.

" It so chanced, that the prior and the sub-prior were gone to Oxford, convened thither by the bishop; and the sacrist, with the cellarar and the rest of the brethren, who most of them were lusty bloods, and enemies to penance, had agreed to hold a night of revelling in their absence.

" The sacrist, being a shrewd knave, was elected abbot of Misrule, and, according to ancient customs, became the master and regulator of the sports. This jolly crack-jape, having his head decorated with a gilt mitre, presided at the head of the table, and directed his comrades.

" When the two priests were brought in, they saluted the company with a seemly benediction, and the abbot caused them to be placed, one at his right hand and one at his left, saying, ' Well ye ween, this is the tide in which we celebrate the festival of our Lord's nativity, and make merry; take your seats, and join with us in the pastime, and ye shall be right welcome.' The cellarar then handed to each of them a cup of spiced wine, for that they were cold, and the abbot continued his harangue:—' Ye are to learn, we are now at a jolly gambol; every one of us, withouten any lett at all, in his turn, must sing a glee, song, or tellen a tale of merriment. The jape stand with friar Peter, and it will come to us anon.' But these lewd friars sang so shrewishly, and with words so foul, that good manners biddeth them not to be told, and their tales were idle jests of sinful lechery and naughtiness, so that when it came to the two strangers, they were sore abashed, and weened not what to sing. Dan John, whose turn was first, after casting sometime in his mind the kind of verses he should give, and not knowing any so unseemly as those he had heard set forth, chose the following carol, as meet for the holy tide:—

Saint Stephen was a couthly child,
In royal Herod's hall;
And served him in cloth and bread,
As should a king befall.

Saint Stephen out of kitchen came,
With boar's head in his hand,
And saw a star, full fair and bright,
O'er Bethl'em city stand.

Adown he cast the boar's head,
And went into the hall,
Where doughy Herod sat in state
Amidst his nobles all.

' King Herod, lo! I thee forsake,
And all thy works, I wiss;
There is a Child in Bethl'em born,
Shall bring us all to bliss.'

' What aileth thee, thou imp, Stephen?
Or what is thee befall?
Say, dost thou lack or meat or drink
In kingly Herod's hell?'

' Me lacketh neither meat nor drink
In kingly Herod's hall;
But there's a Child in Bethl'em born,
Far better than you all.'

' What aileth Stephen? art thou wode?
Or ginnest thou to braid?
Say, dost thou lack or gold, or fee,
Or any costly wode?'

' Me lacketh neither gold, nor fee,
Nor any costly wode;
But there's a Child in Bethl'em born,
Shall help us at our need.'

' Full sooth,' quoth Stephen, ' do I say,
As in full sooth I wish,
This capon, dead, to rise and crow,
That lieth here in my dish.'

That word it was no sooner said,
That word within the hall,
The capon crow'd, ' Our Lord's yborn,
Among the nobles all.'

' Rise, my tormentors!' quoth the king,
And spake full angrily;
' Lead forth the treachor from the town,
And stonk him till he die!'

Then mocked they Stephen as he went,
And stoned him in the way;
And, therefore, is his evyn kept
On Christ's own natal day.

" By my hallo-dam, you are a seely dissour," cried the abbot of Misrule, " thou art altogether beside the purpose; for well you might wot this geer is suited to the lenten days, when men do penance, and not for this merry festival; arede you then rightly, we shall expect another kind of saying from your comrade, and better mated to our jolliment; come, trowle the bowl about, and I will give you a virelay suited to my own grec:—

SONG.

' Stop, hoodsman, stop! nor pass us by,
Counting for ay thy coral beads;
The lusty bowl invites thine eye,
And tells thee what thy belly needs.'

' Thy glowing cheeks, thy blazing nose,
With many rich carbuncles gay,
Are shining lights, and well disclose
The part at table thou canst play.'

' Do not we hear the plaintive cry
Thy belly makes, for fowl, and fish;
For capon, ven'son, pudding, pie,
And every other dainty dish?'

' Nor less it claims, from custom due,
Large draughts of ale, and spiced wine;
Stint not, it cries, to me be true;
Be all these welcome blessings mine!'

' Tis three long hours, by Adam's dele!
And three long days they seemed at least;
The mass detained me from the bowl,
And pious orgies of the feast.'

' The lazy mass-priest was too len
In penance sharp he made me pine;
There was no music in his song;
His prayer was naught, it brought no wine.'

'If life be short, as bookmen say,
It is our duty, well I ween,
While shines the sun, to make our hay,
And dance in summer o'er the green.'

'But, when our prier he will prate
Of shrift, at Lent, and abstinence,
Of early mass, and vespers late,
I hold his sermons void of sense.'

'For why should we ourselves torment
In vain? and, with a fretful mind,
Eschew the blessings for us sent,
And be to present pleasures blind.'

'Then, night and day, to belly true,
In revelry be blithe and brave;
Nor flinch while one small drop is due:
For sleeping,—leave it to the grave.'

"The song being ended, the abbot addressed himself to the other priest, saying, 'Whatever, mister wight, you be—if minstrel, juggler, or contour—it is time your mail should be unbuckled. The merriment stands at your door, and you were best not to let the fair game.' 'In good sooth,' quoth the priest, 'I had never you would pass me by, for you may wet that I am no brawler, no japer; and, if I misrede not, we are well avised by the *Postie-Paul* not to wanton away our time in idle leesings, and wayward fables, which have nought of sooth. But, if ye list, I will read to you-a-far or two from my portass; or make, to the best of my conning, a profitable discourse against the heavy sin of goulardism, or glotony, and the unfit usance of strong drink; for look what the same apostle, writing to the *Philippians*, saith concerning those seely folk, who wilfully forsaking the true God, like filthy swine, make a god of their bellies.' 'Stint thy preachment, and 'twere best,' cried the abbot; 'by the mass-bell, your clapper is too loud. We be not seeking for tales of dreariment; sickerly I wene you, leave your pisties for the housing tide, and shew us a cast of your conning, as be it a sleight of legende-main, the dancing of a minmet, or a trick of tumbling.' 'I told you before,' replied the stranger, 'that I have no knackesies. I am God wot, poor priest, who, with my brother here, were benighted in our travel, and sought, for God's sake, harbour till the morning.' 'By the blood of St. Benedict, our hallowed patron,' exclaimed the cellaror, 'we have given the wassail to vermins of a secular cast, I trow! and, so help me, Holy Mary, I weened they were minstrels, or jugglers, or they had found no welcome here. But, sithence they cannot pay their meed with merry glee, we will send them forth afield, and keep no spies among us.' This ruthless conclusion was effectsen put into execution, else the season was right misfitting for travelling. It showered space, and the poor priests were unwitting of their way. They begged, in the name of Him who suffered to redeem them from dole, and in the name of St. Benedict, and every other holy saint and martyr they could call to mind, to have the housing till daybreak; but nothing might they be heard, for the losel friars took their staves and beat them from the door, so that they were aghast, and dement to have been slain did they not weend evengyl which they did in pitiful plight,

with beasts full of dreariment. Here ends the First Fit.

"And now, my good masters, ye wot well it is the manner of us tale-tellers, to put the hood about for a trifle of coin more before the Second Fit be rehearsed; but if you will glad my heart with a cup of spiced wine, for my throat is dry with talking, I will set forth the other part without expectation of any further guerdon."

His request was readily complied with; and, having drank a hearty draught, he continued the tale in these words:—

"The priests had not gone more than two or three bow-shots from the priory, when they espied a bevy of damosels, yclad in mummery habits, and some of them were wimpled and veiled like nuns. Each of them carried a lighted torch, and they tripped nimbly along in a dancing guise, earolling as they went with a merry glee, and little recking of the snow that fell, because, I wiss, their journey was not long. Having reached the priory, they beat upon the gate, and were easiesoon admitted.

" 'Aho!' said Don John, 'these lecher friars, I ken, must have their lemans to solace with them in the absence of the superiors, and we were thrust from the doors to make room for loose-tundies. God and St. Mary help us! or the cold will driv us to die miserably upon this bleak heath; for I wet not (and, I trow, thou knowest no better,) which way we bair to go for more speedy harbouring.' 'I tell thee what, brother John,' said his companion, 'certes, we be in maine-evil plight, bat complaining will make none amends. Set the best foot forward, man; I ween here be some footsteps. If my eyes deceive me not, I ken over yender coppice the twinkling of a candle.' 'St. Thomas send us well thither,' answered John; 'and may the foul fiend abash these lewd monks, and shorten their unseemly disport!' 'Let be,' quoth his companion; 'for, if they are cleanly yshriten at Shrovetide, they shall have a heavy Lent for their Christmass-glee.'

"This said, they held on their way unearthly towards the light, when, of a sudden, it was divided into many lights, disappearing in one part, and appearing again in another after a strange guise; so that they deemed the foul fiend had beset them with wandering fires, yclept Jack-o'-Lanterns, to mislead them into some swamp or pool to their destruction; and, therefore, both of them coaned over their night-spell, to which they added a paternoster; with other good prayers, and oftsoons the lights were gone.

"Some time afterward they reached the borders of a large wood, where there were several roads; and while they were hesitating which they should chuse, the lights appeared again among the bushes, but much nearer, and discovered a large train of horsemen, with their servants bearing lighted torches; and, upon their approach, our travellers perceived them to be ecclesiastics, which made them right glad; and humbly addressing themselves to him who appeared to be highest in authority, besought himearnly to acquit them where they might find housing till the morning. 'We are,' said they; 'God wot, two priests, who have far travelled, and, as you see, benighted in this stound, and sore assotied by the cold wind and the snow.' 'Gramercy!' returned the horseman, 'but certes ye be in a worthy plight; and have unwittingly overpassed the only grymes for har-

“Ver- ver- ver hand- er arde me, my friends, how hap- dit you passed the priory to the right? for well I ween ye have travelled that road. It is the duty of thilk brotherhood to receive strangers, for God’s sake, and to fare them well.” “Cortes then,” said Dan John, “they have full feulily denit by us;” and with that he reisted to the horseman what had passed there, the manner in which they had been thrust from the doors, and the arrival of the jolly wassailers, who had been admitted afterwards. “By holy Saint Benedict, our blessed patro!” returned the prior, for it was him they were speaking to, “if ye tell me no leesings, I will make them dear aby this misrule. Ye shall go back with me, and my authority, I ween, will make sicker your welcome: so saying, he caused two of the grooms to dismount, and having set the priests upon their horses, they rode together towards the priory. When the prior, having a crafty thought in his head, to be himself, unseen, a witness to the jolliment, and to work the more shame upoa the lusty revellers, caused his followers to abide at that stound, in a dell, at a short distance from the priory, and he, with the two priests, went forward on foot. He had with him a key of a private door belonging to his own apartment, and afforded a communication with a gallery, in which was a window that commanded a full view of the hall, and the company therein assembled. Here he came, with his two companions, and was presently assured, from his own kenning, that they had not belied the brethren. The supper was just serving up, and the prior desiring the priests to remain there, and carefully note where every thing should be deposited, so as to bear the same in memory, withdrew, and returned to his company, who all came forward with him; and knocking aloud at the gate, every thing in the hall was suddenly thrown into the utmost confusion, the alarm being given that the prior and sub-governors were returned: the boards were cleared in an instant, the cloths removed, and the lemans, who visited the pious fraternity, were inconveniently thrust into a hiding-place; and such of the friars, whose duty called them not to wait upon their superiors, slunk into their cells, bestowing many a malediction upon their mishap, in having so fair a game so foully stinted.

“When the prior entered the hall, he inquired why he found so large a fire in the chimney; and, after some hesitation, the sacrist told him, ‘that the night being cold, the brethren had met there to say their vespers.’ ‘By my Holy Dame,’ said the prior, ‘here is a savoury smell! I trust their prayers have been well received: and as the hall is right warm, I hold it good to tarry here, for in sooth I am somewhat surbett with riding. Lay a carpet upon the board, with napkins; I would fain have wherewithal to eat.’ ‘My Lord,’ quoth the collarar, ‘the fire is made in the refectory, and the purveyor will cover the board there in a short space.’ ‘Gramercy, for your diligence,’ answered the prior, ‘it is right commendable; but now I remember me, I have brought with me from Oxford a conning clerk, who deals in magic, and is a subtle tregetour; he has promised to show me of his craft, and to work many wondrous doings; I am not the charl to have this pastime to myself, but am willing all the brethren should, at this merry tide, be partakers with me.’

“He then caused all the friars to be summoned,

and when they had entered the hall, to take their places, they were somewhat astirred by the looks of the prior; but when they saw there was no semblance of upbraidings in his countenance, they seated themselves more cheerfully.

The prior then whispered to the sub-prior, who forthwith went privily to the gallery where the priests had been placed; and having furnished them with disguisements, so that they could not readily be known again by those who had seen them before, they were brought into the hall; Dan John passed for the joculator, and his companion for his servant, who carried a small box under his arm, when the prior spake to Dan John in this wise:—“Cortes, I am told you are a skillful tragedour, and well learned in pastimes of magic: if so be, show us of your ability at this merry tide, and you shall not miss your meed.” “So please you, my lord,” replied Dan John, “I am willing to overstep my accustomed practice, and sithence you have been long fasting upon your journey, I hold it right meet to have the tables covered for your refreshment.” “By Saint Thomas,” cried the prior, “that were in sooth a good deed done, and marry none the worse if it be eftsoons done!” “Your lordship,” quoth the pretended juggler, “need only command the pages to pight the carpets, and spread the napkins, for I am ready to make an essay of my craft.” The carpets were pight, and the napkins spread incontinently. The friars at this tide were nought inclined to mirth, but unearthly kept their scents, silently eying each other, and casting in their minds what seicouth gambol was to follow this preparation. Dan John called for chafing-dish filled with live coals, and taking a portion of powder from the box which his companion bore beneath his arm, he cast the same upon the fire, saying, “Wend hither, ye buxom spirits of the night, who confessen the power of this spell; and bring with you capons richly stewed, doe venison ybaked in pies, with wild ducks, cygnets, and other water-fowl.” “By the blessed Martyr of Kent ye have said well,” quoth the prior; “but so far as I can see, our supper will be an imaginary one.” “Arde you, my lord,” returned the juggler, “the spirits I have called upon are real spirits, and wend to and fro without being keened by mortal eyes; but cause the closet at your lordship’s right hand to be opened, and you shall be my witness the goblins have not deceipted me.” The closet was opened, and the dainties produced. “And now,” continued Dan John, “I will add some other dishes well accorded to the season;” so saying, he repeated his spell, and hight his spirits to bring “a brave boar’s head well brawned, chines of fat porkers, and turkies roasted:” these were found in the opposite closet at the prior’s left hand, and pight upon the table. “The manchet and fine bread,” added the juggler, “will be found in abundance behind the high desk.” By this time the tables were fairly covered, when the prior spake thus: “In truth you are a notable artist, and have der: if the whole be not an illusion of the foul fiend, we shall not sleep with empty stomachs; but I wot, eyr, thir lacketh yet one thing, and that is wine.” “In sooth, my lord, as I told you, mine are airy spirits, and meddle not greatly with that article; beneath the stalls there are a few pottle pots, but my familiar aredes me, that he can find none better than in your lordship’s cell;

ars.' The prior laughed heartily at this conclusion; and having given his benediction, ordered the carvers to do their duty; 'for I perceive,' said he, 'this is none illusion, but substantial food, well ycooked, and suited to the holy tide.'

"The pious fraternity, whilom so joyous, now sat upon thorna, and sore abashed, foreseeing that this guileful beginning would bring forth a noyous ending; for they deamp well they had been bewrayed, but wot not by what malengine, unless the jocular really deal'd with the devil: yet, in order to gloss over the matter as far as they might, they partook of the provision, though with little appetite, and prayed lustily that every morse might choke the juggler, who, nothing recking of their curses, with his companion, eat and drank chearly; and the prior, with the superior officers, were exceedingly facetious. After the supper was ended, and the viands taken from the tables, the prior filled a large cup with white Muscadel, and presented the same to Dan John, saying, 'Sickerly, my friend, we have to remercy you for a fair entertainment: this is the rarest cast of jugglery I ever beheld. But rede me, now soothly, I pray you, are these things counterfeited by the craft of magic natural, or by the couthly workings of spirits, or fairy elves, such as old stories tellen dance in the green meads by moonlight?' 'Wot you not, my lord,' said Dan John, 'I called my spirits by a charm, which magic natural teacheth, so cometh their obeisance; for, as I told you, they work unseen.' 'But may they not take upon them a bodily form, so be it you command them?' quoth the prior. 'Certes they may,' said John. 'Sithence you grant it so,' answered the prior, 'if you have not gone to the extent of your conning, I should like well to see some sprite, or elf, in human form.' 'In good sooth, my lord,' returned the juggler, 'you have proposed a deed unneathly to be performed: yet to do you pleasure, I will not stint the essayment of my art, but I arede you all to be aware of harm, and to keep your places. The spirits I shall upraise are right seemly in their form, but crafty and treacherous in their actions, and apt to entice men to lustful and wanton dalliance, unprofitable to their souls: and further, I warn you to eschew them, for they be foul thieves and plunderers, and you must whip them soundly, or cftsoons they will return again, and rob your cellars, your kitchen, and your pantry, for wot ye well they be great gormondisers.' 'You say well,' said the prior, 'and I will order eight or ten of the most sturdy grooms from the stables to stand accoiled with scourges in their hands, to smite when the time requires.' The grooms were forthwith brought into the hall, and placed near to the door, the station assigned to them by the juggler. The friars, alges they were sore awaped, could no longer refrain from murmuring; they foresaw to what purpose this arrangement was made; and the sacrist, joined with the cellarar, made bold to address the prior in these words:—'My good lord, ourselves and the brethren at large, entreat you to bear in souvenance, that we be forsaid to use such cursed conjurations, or by craft of necromancy, hold communication withathan or his foul angels. We are aghast at the evil workings of this wicked wizard, and beseech you to stint him. Sithence the fiends be more paisant than mortal wights, and woe the while, if we attempt to overcraw them, they may raise a tempest of thunder to harrow our holy house, and

bren us with the leuen braad.' 'Be not accoyed, my brethren,' returned the prior, 'the piety with which you performed the vespers this evening, and the beadings you have made to God, the Holy Virgin, and all Saints, at that stound, shall abet you from danger of sorcery or enchantment; but well I wot the orgies now to be performed shall purify these walls from pollution rather than endanger their downfall.' Dan John now threw the powder a third time into the fire, and then ordered the grooms to open the closet at the bottom of the hall, and incontinently a bevy of wanton bonnibelies rushed out, shrieking most pitously when they were discovered. The grooms, according to the ordera they had received, laid on the lash with lustihed, reckless of the cries and jangles of the seely wantons. The ruthful beadsmen, to empeach the chastisement of their dear lemans, rose up cftsoons, and rushing towards the door, attempt ed to burst it open; in the scuffl the tables were subvers'd, and the lights at the lower end of the hall were suddenly quenct: the tumult became general, and the friars, muddled together with the wenches, were beat down the one over the other, and whipped in their turns, for the sturdy grooms favoured none who came near them. The sacrist, in forcing open the door, struck his forehead against one of the abutments, and was nearly drent with his own blood; the cellarar, hastening to his relief, fell over a form, and bared his shin to the bone. Both of them bawled aloud for relief, but their cries were not distinguished amidst the general steven, shrieking, and scathful uproar.

"The prior withdrew to his apartment at the onset, and took the two priests with him, and when he thought the friars and their lemans were sufficiently yspent, he caused the chapel bell to be rung, and sent the sub-priar into the hall to call away the grooms and stint the riot. When the tumult was aslaked the friars were ordered to take their places in the chapel, which they did with much reluctance, and the prior came thither to them, attended by the two priests in their proper habits; he then upbraied them with many bitter reproaches for their lewd deportment, and especially for their lack of charity, when, having suspended the sacrist and the cellarar from their offices for a season, he imposed a heavy penance on the brotherhood, and hight them to sing the midnight service, which well ye may wot, my masters, was done with more dreariment than devotion, and every one of them was permitted to depart to his cell.

"The two priests were fairly appayed for their trouble, and slept warm and quiet. In the morning they brake their fast well, and were dismissed by the prior with his benediction for having exorcised the holy house, and driven thence, with their due querdon, the lewd spirits which had haunted it in his absence. And so ends my tale."

This simple recital gave great satisfaction to the rustic auditory, and every one made his comment upon its merit. Hugh, the carrier, who was not famous for his continency, thought it a shrewd evil deed to maltreat the kind young wenches; and Robin Tospot blamed the friar for putting an end so hastily to the good drinking—"I would have had," quoth he, "the two priests sit up all night by a rousing fire, with two pottle pots of wine at least for each of them, and then, my hearts, by the Lord of Lincoln, they would have been in a rare guise for travelling in the morn-

ing, and nothing fearful of the cold." Hob Filcher approved of his friend Robin's amendment—"but, by the bones," said he, "the tale is a good one, and the disrou shall have his gree."

The ale was pushed merrily about until it was nearly midnight, when the company parted in good humour with each other, and every one returned quietly to his own home.

CHAPTER XXII.

An Exploit of the Jester, which ends unhappily.

When Gregory was cured of his wounds, and ventured forth again, he was informed that his antagonist Ralph and Margery, the glover's daughter, were not only reconciled to each other, but that she had consented to be his bride, and the preparations were actually making for their union. He now plainly perceived that Margery had befooled him, and counterfeited a fondness for him merely for the sake of punishing his rival. This reflection made him very angry, and if he had dared, he would have recked his vengeance upon the fortunate tasker; but not holding such an attempt to be consistent with prudence, he turned his anger into another channel, and determined to direct his fury against the fair damsel herself, whom he thought was less capable of resistance, and having learned that she was about to visit a poor relation who was dangerously ill, he watched her out in the afternoon, and seeing she went alone, thought it was likely she might return the same. He, therefore, provided himself with a white sheet, and hid himself in a hollow tree by the path side in the warren, this being the way she was most likely to return. He wrapped himself in the sheet, and took his stand as soon as the evening shut in. He had been there upwards of an hour without any one passing, when the moon arose, and he perceived a female coming over the stile, at the bottom of the warren, whom he doubted not was his fickle mistress; and at her approach he stalked with great solemnity from the tree, full in her sight, and mounting a little eminence, raised himself on his tiptoes, and elevated his hands, in order to appear the taller. He performed his part with so much skill that the poor female, who took him for a real spectre, screamed out with affright, and fled from him with the greatest precipitation; he, however, soon discovered that it was not Margery, but Dame Everid, Ralph's mother, he had so violently terrified, and as he had no quarrel with her, he did not pursue, but withdrew behind a thicket of holly, and thence returned quietly to his post again, where he awaited with patience the arrival of his mistress Margery.

Dame Everid, who really believed she had seen a perfect apparition, was terribly frightened, nearly out of her wits, and made the best of her way to Tewin-green, without daring to look behind her, where running into Hob Filcher's, whose house she first came into, she threw herself into a chair, where she sat panting for breath without being able to utter a single word; her face was as pale as dust, and her eyes stood as though she had been mad.

There were several of Hob's usual customers drinking in the kitchen at the same time, who were all of them prodigiously surprised at the deportment of the tasker's mother. "By the death of my grandame," said the host, "the good dame is sore aghast! she is either wode or planet-struck."

His guests were solicitous to know what had happened to her; but it was several minutes before she could utter any expressions that were intelligible, and these were short ejaculations to saints; but after having crossed herself several times, and counted her rosary, she exclaimed—"Save me, sweet Lady Virgin! Save me from the foul fiend!"

"By the Lord of Lincoln," said Robin Toss-pot, "Hob Filcher has hit the right nail upon the head! the silly old gammer is stark wode;" and to this the whole company agreed.

At last, however, after she had swallowed a cupful of metheglin, made hot with spices, which Tip, the hostess, had prepared for her, she came to herself, and assured the assembly that she had seen a ghastly goblin in the warren, all in white, and as tall as Tewin church-steeple, with flaming eyes as big as saucers: that it stood by the side of the crooked oak, crossed her path, and raised its arms as though it had been to seize upon her.

"Benedicite!" cried Tib, and kissed the cross of a rosary that hung from the cell of the mantelpiece. Robin Toss-pot, and the rest of his companions, made a joke of the old woman's story: and two cross-bowmen, who had just arrived from Hertford, and were drinking a horn or two of ale, were particularly facetious upon the occasion.

The old woman was highly offended that her recital met with so little credence, and especially of the liberty the two military guests had taken upon the occasion, when she thus addressed herself to them:—"Without doubt ye be tall men, because you wear a soldier's badge, but there is mony a cock of the game that has a white feather in his tail; and let me tell you, if the hobgoblin had met you in your way, he would have made your teeth chitter; for well ye may wot the fiend cares not for your quilted pourpoints, your iron skull-caps, no nor for the long swords you carry in your belts, no nor your belts and your bows to boot. In sooth you must have other kinds of shields to defend yourselves, than the round penches you carry at your backs."

"Not so fast, gammer," cried one of them, "for you may not; and if the goblin will but wait in the warren for our coming, we will give him his errand."

"By these ten fingers," said his companion, "he had best begone! for if we find him, we will curry his hide; let him take heed, or we will roast him at his own fire."

"O! no doubt you are tongue doughy h'cows," cried the old dame; "it is always the guise of such swaggering companions, to talk like tall men while tipping at an ale-stake, and the fumes of the ale makes valour great when scathe and danger is distant; but, by the holy cross, I know you will be glad to untruss a point, if the foul fiend should stare you in the face."

"Cogs blood but we will try that," cried one of them, throwing down a groat to pay for what they had drank; he took his shange, and then,

wishing the company good night, departed, singing as he went:—

“ Be he the foul fiend, or a ghost,
It boots not, let him but appear;
He shall have little fame to boast,
We'll send him packing, never fear.

Let him, d'ye see, the foul fiend be,
Hobgoblin fierce, or ghost,
It matters not, the lozel sot
Shall have small cost to boast.

If he appear, we'll make him fear
The sea so red and wide;
For there I trow, he soon shall go,
To tan his ugly hide.”

“ Benedicite!” cried the hostess, “ was ever there two such fell swaggers?”

“ Let be, let be,” said dame Everid; “ if they were to the warren, they will sing another gues song, anon.”

Gregory, as before observed, having frightened the tasker's mother, returned to his stand, where he frequently peeped out in expectation of seeing his fair foe appear. He was nearly tired with waiting, and began to think of returning, when he heard the voice of some persons coming from the upper part of the warren; these were no other than the two soldiers from Hob-Filcher's. Gregory looked out to observe the party, and saw them coming hastily down the hill; but as they were not the game he wanted, he stood up as closely in the tree as possible, expecting they would pass by without perceiving him. In this, however, he was mistaken, for they came directly to the place, when one of them looking into the tree, hollowed out to his comrade—

“ By the soul of St. Guy, the old woman lied not; here is the white thing she prated about; but as I am a soldier, I know not the saucer eyes!”

“ No,” answered the other, “ nor is he so tall as the church-steeple. However, I will assay him—Well, well, my old fox, come out o' thy le, or I'll ghost thee with my costard; and i'faith if it hath made many a ghost of taller knaves than thou.”

So saying, he drew his sword, and his companion did the same; and both of them made toward the tree. Gregory, who had always an unconquerable aversion to a naked sword, found his house would soon be too hot to hold him; he plainly perceived his enemies were not easily to be foiled, and therefore judged it prudent to quit it, and trust to his heels for his security. Accordingly, he rushed suddenly from the tree, and having cast off the sheet, which encumbered his flight, and had nearly thrown him down at the onset, he ran towards the bottom of the warren with great celerity; and the soldier who was nearest to him followed as speedily as he was able, while his comrade, laughing, swore it was the ghost of a jack-hare; “ however,” he added, “ the silly beast has left his hide behind him, which I shall claim as my fair perquisite;” and so saying, he put the sheet into his pouch. In the mean time, he who pursued Gregory gained ground upon him; which being perceived by the latter, he shifted his path, and, instead of running towards the bridge by the side of the house,

turned short into the meadow:—the soldier still following close at his heels, and passing the dove-house, he thought, by taking the road near the fish-pond, to gain the bridge without any difficulty; but the second soldier seeing the double which Gregory had made to effect his escape, took his station at the bridge, by which means the unfortunate jester was beset at either end of the road, and was reduced to the necessity of surrendering at discretion, or to leap into the river on the one hand, or the pond on the other. He preferred the river, and being near a place he knew was fordable, and because he could not swim, he began with caution to wade through. When the soldier at the bridge saw Gregory take the water, he crossed over, and running up to the bank, arrived time enough to prevent the jester from effecting his landing; his comrade also came up, at the same time, upon the opposite bank. Having thus completely entrapped the apparition, they called upon him to capitulate; and threatening to have recourse to their bows in case of his non-compliance. Never was any poor ghost so terribly frightened before; and being chilled with the cold, his teeth chattered in his head: he therefore lifted up his hands in token of a surrender, and begged to be relieved from his purgatory; which, on the part of the soldiers, was agreed to. He then made towards the bank of the river, on the Tewin side; and, because it was rather too steep, he entreated the soldier to assist him, which he readily promised to do; but no sooner had he got the jester's hand in his grasp, than he plunged him two or three times over head and ears into the water, and at last drew him out panting for breath, and half drowned; and as soon as he recovered himself, this merciless enemy began to belabour him over the back and shoulders with the flat part of his sword, which he used by way of a cudgel, till he roared like a baited bull; and falling upon his knees, besought him to forbear, assuring him that he was no ghost, but a man.

“ No ghost! In the devil's name,” cried the soldier, “ what could make you take up the resemblance of a goblin?”

“ No-no-nothing,” said Gregory, stammering, and frightened out of his wits.

“ Nothing, thou varlet!” replied the soldier, surly.

“ No-no-nothing, in so-so-sooth, but that I was a foo-foo-fool.”

“ I believe thou art a fool,” returned the soldier.

“ Yes, I am, I am,” said the jester; “ that is all.”

“ No, no,” answered the man of war, “ thou art a wilful knave as well as a fool, and deserved the maltreatment you have met with. But private, goodman-fool, go home, and learn to be wiser to-morrow.”

So saying, he gave him a kick on the breech, which honest Gregory received very quietly, and returning a low bow, made the best of his way to Tewin-green.

When the soldier joined his comrade, both of them proceeded towards Welwyn, singing as before—

Let him, d'ye see, hobgoblin be; &c.

Poor Gregory, dripping wet, well beaten, and disappointed of his intended vengeance, was in

deplorable taking. As soon as he had recovered himself from his fright, and was convinced that the danger was over, he cast in his mind what steps it would be most prudent for him to take—dry clothes seemed indispensably necessary; but how to procure them without exposing himself to ridicule was the difficulty; and to appear in the town he was, before his fellow-servants, at Queenhoo Hall, was not to be thought of. At last he determined to pump up a dismal story of spectres in the warren to amuse the toppers at Hob Filcher's, and dry himself by the fire in his kitchen.

When the soldiers had departed from the kitchen, the company began to animadvert at large upon the story related by Dame Everid. Some believed it, and sided with her; others again imagined she had taken a horn or two more ale than usual at Tewinwater great house, where it appeared she had been, and so said they, being scared at her shadow, had transmewed one of the milk cows into a ghost.

The old lady, on the contrary, asserted, that the goblin which had appeared to her had only two legs, and that his eyes were as large as saucers.

While these arguments were handing about, in rushed Gregory, his garments drenched with water, his hair dishevelled about his ears, his teeth chattering—he ran towards the fire, where he stood trembling, and the first words he uttered were, "The ve-va-very d-devil himself is in the warren."

"Did not I tell you?" cried the old woman, "but you, would not believe me."

The attention of all the company was instantly turned towards the jester—his wet condition, and frightened appearance, had too much of nature in it to be counterfeit.

The story of the spectre gained credit with the greater part of the company, who began to be alarmed, and "Benedicite" was in the mouth of many, who had not used a word of such sacred import for several moons.

In the meantime Gregory stood shivering by the fireside, and begged of Hob, for mercy's sake, to throw on an additional faggot; and, having taken a large horn of warm spiced wine, he appeared to be more calm.

Every one was questioning him with respect to what he had seen, to which he replied, "My masters, why, I have seen the devil and his dam, I trow, with a host of their imps. Why, I fought with a score at least of goblins at one time; and by'r Lady, I swung them soundly with my oaken toawl; but woe the while they sprouted up like mushrooms, overpowering me by numbers, and will ye or nil ye, they tumbled me down to the river, sowsed me into the water over head and ears, and then pulling me through bush and brier, and thumping me against the trees, at last they left me astride upon the stile, at the top of the warren, half dead with the fatigue of hard fighting, and in the condition you now see me."

"Saint Bridget protect us from foul spirits!" cried Tib, the hostess, crossing herself; "sure, Master Gregory, you was not at mass last Sunday, nor shrift yourself at Shrovetide. Bless us, 'tis a wonder Satan did not make away with thee at once."

"Away, you silly sot," answered the host, "if the foul fiend would do me justice, he would silence that shrew's slack of thine—go to, you fool, what should the devil have to do with Shrovetide more than any other tide! Out upon you for

a widgeon, dost think he plays at ho-peep in a paneake?"

"Well, said Hob," cried Robin Tospot; "for my part, I have heard much of the evil fiend Satan but he always knew better than to meet me. I defy him and his horns, and his claws into the bargain."

"Out upon thee, thou perilous pagan, thou scaly sot!" cried Dame Everid; "the neighbours wot well that you are a very Jew at unbelief, and none of us would wonder if the fiend should come after cock crowing, and fetch thee away in a storm of fire and brimstone for your waywardness!"

Tospot was wondrously witty, in his way, upon the old dame, still persisting in it that her bewilder'd fancy had led her to mistake the squire's white cow for a spirit.

"Ay, but," said Wat Coulter, "if Dame Everid be mistaken, what say you to Master Gregory and his kennel of foul fiends?"

"Who, Gregory?" cried Tospot, with a hiccup—"why he, I trow, got drunk at mother Ranet's ale-stake, near Digsawell's mill, and rolled into the river coming back, as I did three moons ago into the May-pond. By the mass I thought I was passed by a legion of fairy spirits; but being soased in the water brought me to my senses, and when I paddled out of the water I saw nobody but Tom the hedger's old sow, with her litter of nine pigs" —(here the clowns laughed heartily)—"and thus it happened," added Tospot, "by me when I was drunk."

"It did," answered Gregory, "for who amongst us can bear in mind, Master Swillbowl, when you were sober? not these ten winters, I can take upon me to swear. Out upon him, for he is no better than a pagan Turk."

"No, more he is, Dame Everid," said Tib: "he swears like iniquity in, a mortality play."

"Shut your gossiping, you callat," said Hob to his wife; let us have no more of your caterwauling: odd's heart, let us have no more clamour and contention. Who calls for a pot of ale, or a bottle of spiced wine?"

"By the mass, my jolly host, but you say well," cried Tospot. "A cup of nice sack is the best spirit I ever met; and, as I am a true man," added he, hiccuping, "it never hurts me."

"And that is a spirit," returned the landlord, "that I am conjurer enough to raise whenever I have customers to lay it."

"Which, by the bones, I can do at all times," said Robin: "not by sending it into the red sea, but by turning it down the red lane, my brays heart."

Here all the clowns burst into a loud laugh; the women held up their hands, and said their night spell; and Gregory viewing them with an eye of contempt, said they were foul-hearted Jews, and children of Judas.

All this time Pierce, the potter, who had not interfered in the preceding discourse, came gravely forward, and addressing himself to the jester, said, "I marvel much, Master Gregory, if you did not meet with two sturdy knaves of crossbowmen."

Gregory was exceedingly disconcerted at this question (for he was not at all aware that the soldiers had called at Hob Filcher's) and it was some time before he could determine upon an answer; at last he resolved at all events to give it in the negative.

"Why, that is a main strange chance," returned Pierce, "for it is not past two hours since two swaggering blades of soldiers, with their swords and bucklers, and armed in quilted, called in here on their way from Hertford to Wellwyn, and seeing Dame Everid so frightened, they proposed to go through the warren; and did you not meet them?"

"Meet the soldiers, sayyou!" returned Gregory, much discomposed; "no, by the holy St. Dunstan, not I. 'No-no-soldiers—odds bobs, I should have been glad to have done that, for if they were men they would have come to my assistance.'"

"That is what I meant," said the potter, "for they swore they would swinge the goblin soundly."

"The devil they did!" returned the jester; "but if they had seen what I have seen, and been put to it as much as I have been put to it, by a whole swarm of goblins, they would have stutted, I trow, their big talking. I saw them not, and perhaps the foul fiend has run away with them on account of their swaggering manners, as he and his imps would have done with me had I not found time to repeat my paternoster."

"What!" cried Tosspot, laughing, "do you really trow, in sooth, that the devil has clapped his claws upon the two sturdy men of war, and carried them quick to purgatory?"

"I know not," answered the jester, surly; "but I wish he had them and you to, you silly sot. The fiend indeed only lets you alone because he is sure of you, and troubles himself with such as he is in doubt may escape from his griping."

"Marry, well said, and to the purpose," cried Tosspot; "why, my lord's knave of a jester has played the fool so long by profession, that he is become a natural fool, and dreams of elves, and ghosts, and jack-a-lanterus."

This occasioned another general laugh.

Gregory shrugged up his shoulders, and made no reply, for the subject of the soldiers was not at all suited to his satisfaction, and he began to fear that, through their medium, the whole transaction might be divulged; and he certainly had no desire that the true part he had taken in it should be brought to light. Dame Everid returned home; and the jester tarried some time longer to dry himself more thoroughly.

The jolly topers finding it began to grow late, were now about to depart, when their company was increased, and their appetite for ale and revelling renewed, by the return of that same aged minstrel or dissoour, who had so well played his part upon the evening of the combat between Gregory and the tasker. The wassail bowl was speedily replenished at the special intimation of Robin Tosspot, and under his immediate direction.

"For look you," said Robin, "I have afeat above all the smiths in Nineveh. I am a philosopher that can dispute you of the nature of ale; and mark you, sir, a pot of ale consists of four parts—imprimis, the ale; secondly, the toast; thirdly, the nutmeg; fourthly, the ginger—which we clerks call the four elements of the tankard; and if you quaff him to the tune of a merry tale or song, why he has no fellow in all the schools."

"And a merry tale shall you have, my masters," quoth the dissoour, addressing himself to the jolly group; "collect me but three groats among you to pay my lodging and my cheer, and you shall have one worth three golden eagles."

"Marry," said Tosspot, "let it be such a tale as thou told'st us last, and thy lodging shall be neither better nor worse than in mine own truckle bed, though I should sit up for it all night with my friend Filcher."

The old man thanked his quondam host for his courtesy, and putting himself in a proper attitude, partly recited, partly sung, as follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Tale.

About a century past, there lived at Hatfield a merry fellow, well known in this village, who followed the double occupation of a tailor and a barber. He was usually denominated the little tailor—and by that appellation, so please you, I will call him. He was much esteemed by his neighbours, not only on account of his skilfulness in his profession, but more especially for his mirthfulness; for he was constantly whistling or singing, or telling merry tales to please his customers; and if perchance, in shaving, he drew blood of any one of them, he had the method of apologising so archly, that he seldom failed to send them away in a good humour. He had but one fault, and that was, he loved a full can better than his business, and lost many a tester because he was not sufficiently sober to perform the duties of his occupation.

"By'r Lady," quoth Hob Filcher, "he was a right honest-hearted lad, and a true man, I warrant."

"I hold with you there," answered Tosspot; "he was one of our own kidney."

The narrator smiled at the observations, and went on. It chanced on a time that the little tailor came over to Tewin, as he was accustomed to do occasionally, to work at the farm-houses, and make up such garments as might be needful in the families; and the story says, he never wanted for employment; but at night he usually gave the good folks the slip, and stole down hither, where he was joined by several of his old pot-companions, and passed the night in mirth and jollity.

"By the blood of Termagart, he was a pig of my father's sow; a very lad after my own heart!" cried Tosspot.

It was now, continued the tale-teller, a few days before the feast of Saint Michael; and the little tailor having finished his business at Tewin, determined to purchase a goose to roast on the Michaelmas-day, which purchase he made; and, after passing the evening here with his jovial comrades, he took up his goose under his arm, and between twelve and one set off by the light of the moon for Hatfield, singing merrily as he went, with a heart devoid of care, and his belly full of good ale. Now you all well know that the nearest path to Hatfield is down the warren, and through the farm-yard at Tewinbury.

At that time there lived at the farm-house an austere varlet, whose name was Piers; but he was more usually known by the mock appellation of Crabtree, on account of the souness of his disposition. He was reeve to the Baron Fitzallen, of Marden; and assumed great authority over his neighbours.

It so happened, that his hen-roosts and capon-

pens had been lately robbed, and several of his pigs and his geese were also missing; for this reason he determined to sit up and watch for the thief, and on this very night, he, with two sturdy varlets of his household, had placed themselves in a convenient situation to overlook the pullen, and had purposely left the geese in the yard, to give the alarm, in case they should fall asleep, which actually happened. They had also two sharp dogs with them, to be their guard.

The little tailor, as I before told you, came singing down the warren, and into the farm-yard. When he passed by the goose-house, the geese that were lying before the door, being disturbed by him, began to scream—his own goose answered them—and before he was aware, got loose, and ran among the farmer's geese. The tailor followed his goose, and, after some time spent in the pursuit, caught it again. The screaming of the geese, who were frightened by the tailor's running about among them, awakened the three watchmen; and after the farmer had rubbed his eyes, the first thing he saw was the little tailor, in the midst of his geese, taking up a goose, which he clapped under his arm, and was proceeding on his journey without suspicion of harm. The farmer readily concluded that the tailor had stolen one of his geese; and with his men he pursued, and stopped him as he was about to pass the bridge.

"So, so," cried Piers, seizing him by the collar, "we have caught you at last: you are the two-legged fox, are you, that has revelled of late so much among our pullen?"

"Why, Master Piers," said the tailor, "if you take me for a fox, by my fay you are upon a wrong scent. I have got a goose, 'tis true:—but the goose is my own:—

"I bought her to-day,
And for her did pay,
And from mother Bee's I brought her away."

"Tailor, thou art a false knave," said Piers, angrily; "and this tuning and singing will not answer your purpose; I am not to be gulled by a song; do you think I am such a fool?"

"Marry," answered the tailor, "I did not think you was a fool; by my fay, you are as Heaven made you—Heaven may amend you in good time: but for my goose, I will swear to her upon the Bible book."

"Oh, no doubt," cried Piers, "a filching thier will not flinch at a lie, nor heed an oath into the bargain. The goose your own! quotha. No doubt it would have been your own, as many of my cocks and hens, and pigs, have been heretofore; but I shall prevent that transfer of property. Go to; you are a sorry knave, master tailor, by the rood! I thought better things of you; aye, and I would have lent you a noble, or two, or three, on some good pawn, to have bought cloth to have helped you forward with a fair customer; but, marry, the time is gone over, and I will teach you a lesson for filching of poultry:—you shall kiss the stocks, my precious knave, before you are an hour older!"

He then commanded his assistants to take the goose from him.

"Soft and fair, my friends," answered the tailor; "you talk of taking away my goose; but, by the lord of Lincoln, we will have a brush for that. Look you now, my masters, I will defend my goose: and if you take her, you shall take me with her; for nothing but war and bloodshed shall part us—

"Sound, sound the trump,—the clarion sound,
Away to arms—to arms away:
Death stalks the bloody field around,
And harties in the dire affray."

"Go to, thou drunken knave," said Piers; "stint this charm, and put down the goose."

The tailor answered thus:

"Net for thy homestall,
Brave master gripeall:

And that's a new tune, I trow."

"What!" said Piers, "shall I be robbed before my face? Deliver up the goose."

"Why, what a coil you keep," answered the tailor; "have I not told you the goose is mine, bought with a piece of silver!"

"Out upon you for an impudent, lying lozel," said Piers; "did I not see you take it up from the other geese in the yard?"

"I grant you that," said the tailor.

"And yet deny that it is my goose!" retorted Piers. "Go to, you are a willful knave. Take the goose from him, you varlets."

The men were proceeding to obey their master, when the tailor leaped backwards, and brandishing a hedge-stake which he held in his hand, cried, "Hold, hold I say for by the dragon of St. George; I'll rap your coxcombs soundly, if you touch the goose—

"And like that stalworth, doughty knight,
My derring-do I'll wage in fight,
A tailor though I be;
But such derreignment, sure, you'll shun,
Nor overmatch me three to one,
To win the coward's fee."

"The knave is surely possessed; the foul fiend is in him," cried Piers; "he is either drunk or wode; but this pretence shall not serve his turn, and since he will not put down the goose, I will have him up to the green, and let his knaveship's heels kiss the stocks."

"Hark ye, master," cried the little tailor, "I trust you are not in earnest?"

"So sure as you are a filching lozel but I am," returned Piers; "and that you shall find in a short time."

The tailor answered—"I rede you well to consider what you are doing; it will ill become you, who ought to keep the peace, to put an innocent man into durance vile—

"For indeed, bold bowman, I tell you true,
I am not a rogue, for my colour is blue,
And never, oh never will change its hue."

"The saucy Jack laughs at us to our beards; away with him, he shall be well whipped to-morrōw, and then, I trow, he will change his song."

The tailor clapped his hands together, and sang this couplet—

"Let pity move thy ruthless heart,
And take a fordone wretch's part;
Nor let me, guiltless, feel from vengeful scourge the smart."

"Adad, but you shall though, my brave rob-roost," cried Piers; "and in sooth, I will give the beadle a new sixpence of silver to lay the lash upon

thy knave's shoulders soundly. "Away with him to the stocks, where all such varlets ought to be!"

On this the tailor fell upon his knees, and with a woful countenance, placed the body of the goose under his left arm, and retained the neck in both his hands, like the notepipe of the bagpipes, and moving his fingers as if he were stopping, and unstopping the sound-holes, whistled a doleful prelude, and then sang, with a mournful voice—

"In doleful dumps,
From reckless fortune's thumps,
Your faithful tailor see;
Mercy I crave,
From foul disgrace me save;
Behold my woful plight, and pity me."

Having finished this dismal ditty, he leaped from the ground, and began capering and dancing like a madman; singing to a merry tune—

"I can dance it gingerly,
Or leap it jaunily,
And prance it properly,
Feeling full curiously;
What then shall be thought of me?"

Which plessantry, instead of making the farmer merry, excited his wrath more abundantly, and he began storming at his men for not taking the tailor away, swearing, at the same time, that he should pay smart for all the poultry, and pigs that he had lost for a twelvemonth past. The two men finding their master so angry, laid each of them hold on one of the tailor's arms, and led him up the Warren, singing, as he went—

"Weep not, my father; weep not, my mother;
For I shall be with you anon;
With goose under my arm, beteem'd from all harm,
When the leersless old loord shall be gone."

When they reached the stocks, Piers, who had brought up the rear, fearing the tailor should attempt to escape, went to the house of Christopher, the constable, and ordered him to rise, and bring forth the key of the stocks; "for I have got," said he, "the most wilful knave in ten parishes, who claims the honour of passing the remainder of the night in them; and 'fore Heaven, I will take good heed he shall not be stinted of that honour."

Christopher, knowing Piers by his voice, rose instantly, and on opening his door, was greatly surprised to see the little merry tailor of Hatfield in custody, and threatened with the stocks; and he exclaimed—"Is it you, my brave, merry little man? what mad gambols hast thou been playing, to anger Master Piers so hugely?"

The tailor instantly began singing—

"Ask thou of him, and he shall tell,
Who did the doleful deed:
He saw the night-hag set the spell,
He saw the infant bleed.

"Then merry, merry ring the bells;
Come, trowl the bowl about;
Here sprightly laughter ever dwells,
And all her revel rout."

"Murrain on thee!" said Christopher; "you are so full of your quirks and your japes, there is no

knowing how to take thee; what am I to make of this strange virkay?"

"I'll tell thee," cried Piers; "it means that he is a foul-filching thief; he has robbed my capon-pens over and over; and now you see that he has got a goose of mine under his arm."

The constable made answer—"I am sorry to hear this report of you, Master Tailor; you were always well respected in this village, and we all thought you to be another guess kind of man. Fie, now! give up the goose, and entreat Master Piers to pardon the offence; it is not fit that every one should know this misbehaviour; and—"

"Hold thee fast, Master Christopher," interrupted the tailor, "you speak like a good man and true, and as a friend into the bargain, if it should be admitted that I have stolen aught from this surly corn-hearer; but in very sooth, friend Christopher, this goose is my own; and I will not part with it, unless I be forced to do so; and woe betide the hardy wight that dare abide such foul affray; for he, I trow, will prove the thief; and as for my asking pardon, by the mass, not I—I rede him beware, or I will turn the tables, and play his own game back upon him."

"Do you hear how the bandog bays?" cried Piers; "oh, 'tis a lying lout; by holy St. Thomas, the lord of Kent, I saw him catch the goose from my flock, and therefore I charge you whip me him into the stocks; for he is such a filching one; that if he be permitted to depart unpunished, not a neighbour in the parish will be able to keep a hen, a pig, or a goose; and marry, I trow, if he might have his right, the hangman and he would be better acquainted."

"An you go to that," answered the tailor, "I can tell you, if the arch-fiend Beelzebub had his due, our worship would no longer be grinding the faces of the poor, nor be suffered to skim the flints at Tewinbury."

Piers then became furious, and commanded the constable to put the tailor into the stocks, or refuse at his peril, declaring he was ready to make oath he saw the goose stolen, and would answer for the consequence; and Christopher, contrary to his inclination, obeyed the mandate.

The noise occasioned by this transaction, awakened most of the inhabitants of the Green, who arose, and came to see what was going forward; and among them were several of the tailor's jovial comrades. Nothing could exceed their surprise at seeing their merry friend in such an unseemly state, and every one was inquiring what had brought him thither.

"Hark ye, my hearts," said the tailor, "if you all speak at once, I cannot tell which of ye to answer first. Go to; and, if it be possible, cease your clamour, and I will sing ye a short fit, that shall explain the whole to your satisfactions; but, first of all, I must request, that all of ye do look very serious as I do; and if Maud, the spinster, there would cry a little, it would be none the worse—"

"Cease, gentle wight,—to mourn for me:
In sorry plight—what though I be,
Bound by the legs, my mind is free;
And here I hold my goose.
Ah, well-a-day!—Oh!—ales!—ah! well-a-day!"

"The bargain struck,—a great I gave;
It was my luck—this goose to have:
When home returning, blithe and brave,
My goose escape did make.
Ah, well-a-day! &c.

"Then after her—I ran full fast;
Great was the stir—where'er we pass'd,
But I secar'd her at the last;
Nor will I lose my goose.

Ah, well-a-day! &c.

"Up, up, my men,"—old Crabtree cries;
"In yonder glen—my grey goose flies,
And is become another's prize.
(For, I had caught my goose.)

Ah, well-a-day! &c.

"To stop me soon—it was his will,—
By light of moon—up yonder hill
I then was brought, the stocks to fill,
Because I held my goose.

Ah, well-a-day! &c.

"But morning light—will soon be here:
And then my right—full, fair, and clear,
To master bailey shall appear;
And I will keep my goose.

Ah, well-a-day!" &c.

The ditty finished, the tailor thus addressed his auditory:

"And now, my brave gallants, this geer has gone to veryerry tune; and all of ye know as much of the matter as I do. But prithee, now, if ye love me, let some one of ye go to the ale-stake, and get me a pottle of warmed ale, with a toast and nutmeg, to keep the chill, dank air from my stomach; and, for the morey of good fellowship, procure a-trous of dry straw; for, joking apart, the ground is ten times more wet than I wish it to be; and these leg-ormaments are not of the easiest."

His requests were instantly complied with, and a large heaphland was brought, and thrown over his shoulders; and our jovial host's predecessor, being knocked up and apprised of the matter, instead of ale, brought his friend a large bowl of mortified clary, made rich with spices. The little tailor took a copious draught, which warmed his stomach; and he began to laugh and sing, and crack his jests without stinting, keeping his auditory in a roar of laughter.

In the mean time the surly reve, having made inquiry from the people of the green, found that the tailor had actually purchased a goose, which he carried away with him from the alehouse; and he now began to think that he had carried matters too far: and remembering that the tailor had told him he bought the goose of mother Bee, who lived on the Upper Green, he sent for her, in order to be perfectly satisfied. On her arrival, she confirmed the tailor's assertion, and going to him (for he still retained the goose,) declared she was ready to make oath, that it was the same goose he had purchased from her.

When Piers heard this, he accommodated his visage as well as he could to a smile; and addressed himself to the tailor in this manner:

"How now, man! Go to, my little merry fellow: you should have told me plainly, without your quirkis, your japes, and your quiddities, that you had bought the goose: and gadz me, doest think I would have hurt a hair of your head? Holy St. Thomas presseve me, but I have a great respect for you! Come, give me your hand: I am sorry for what has been done—and call for what you like; what it?"

On this, the little tailor eyed him archly; and,

holding up the goose in both his hands, began singing:

"Now, well ye wot, in wreakful fight
I have yahent the doughty knight,
Revers'd his mighty shield, and quell'd his horse:
Crest-fallen, see, aghast he stands;
A wondrous quest 'chiev'd by my hands,
To make sans pity lout, and feel remorse.

"However, Master Piers, I heed thee not. We'll talk more on this matter before the baron in the mornsing:

"And he, I rede, will no way justify
Thy foul award, by which in stocks I lie."

"Nay, nay," replied Piers; "think no more about it:—release him instantly, Christopher; he is a true man,—aye, I trust, and as merry as any in Christendom. Gadz me, I was angry, because, man, I thought you had stolen my hogs and my pullets; but it is all over, and I will be your friend. Come with me to the Bury; I have a rare hoghead of stinging huffcap abroach, and a rasher of bacon on the rack to give the beer a zest; and, as I am a true man, you shall make all our Christmas garments. Go, Simkin," said he to one of his men, "go on before, and bid the wench lay a faggot on the fire, and take down the bacon, and we will be with her anon."

Simkin was much delighted with the order; and, stepping up to the tailor, said, "By the mass, my little merry man, but my master says well: the ale he talks of is as keen as a fox; it was brewed, I wean, last October, and will make you as mellow as an overripe custard."

"Go to; thou art a elod-breaking fool," said the tailor; "I am not to be guill'd with a horn of petty ale;—I have nought to do with you, or your seely comrade there; but for your master,—

"Let he and I the 'ventful battle try;
For, one or both of us are doom'd to die:
And deeds of chivalry achiev'd shall be.
With thimble, sheers, and bar of steel,
I'll take the field, and make the varlet feel
My fury: he shall quell or flee.

"And now, Mr. Christopher," said he, addressing himself to the constable, "I appeal to the baron, and am determined to obtain a hearing in the mornsing. I therefore charge you to see that this same reve be forthcoming; whom I accuse of stopping me, his majesty's liege servant, on the highway, and attempting, by force of arms, to take from me my property; and for falsely confining me in the stocks, contrary to the statute."

"By our Lady!" said Tom Skinker, "the tailor deserves a full bowl of clary, for he speaks like a tall man."

"In good sooth," returned the host, "he that takes my little merry man for a fool, shoots wide of the butts; he has made old Skinflint look grave, and taken him down to the lower tap already."

The tailor was forthwith set at liberty, and his companions manifested their joy by three loud shouts. The company then went to the ale-stake, followed by the reve and his men. The reve finding that, by fair speeches, the little tailor was not to be persuaded to make up the matter without a hearing, before the baron, or his baile, which he had no mind for, proceeded in another manner; and, by calling

lustily for liquor, and pushing about the can without restraint, endeavoured to make him so drunk that he might forget it, or, at least, be reduced to such a situation as to make it impossible for him to appear against him in the morning; in the mean time, he did not doubt being able to make his own part good. The tailor, however, foreseeing, perhaps, his intention, was more cautious than usual; and though he laughed, and sang, and danced all the night, he kept himself collected, and, in the morning, insisted upon being taken with the reve, in proper form, to Marden, as soon as the hour of audience was come; and when they were ushered into the baron's presence, he told his tale with so much simplicity and good humour, that his lordship could not refrain from laughing heartily.

The reve, on the other hand, in defence of his conduct, pleaded the circumstance of seeing the tailor take the goose from his flock, which naturally led him to conclude it was one of his geese: he then adverted to the refusal the tailor made to let him have the goose, and the idle rhyming japes he made, instead of answering fairly and openly on the occasion, to which he certainly might justly impute the inconvenience he had suffered.

When he had done speaking, the tailor addressed the baron, saying, "If your honour will pardon me, I wish to put in a word or two, as my poor wits will permit me, by observing, that Master Piers seems to have been wrong in two points; and, marry, the first is this—when I told him the goose was mine, in not counting his own geese, when, I trow, he would have found the number just what it should be; and, secondly, when he had brought me to the green, in not sending to mother Bee, from whom I assured him I had bought the goose, to know whether I really had made such a purchase or not, before he had disgraced me, and my calling through me, by putting my feet into the stocks, as though I had been a thief and a vagabond. The threats of the scourge (for I assure your honour he promised me, in his bounty, a sound whipping,) I look over—he was angry without cause: and how far he may have cause to be pleased with his unseasonable, or rather unreasonable, proceeding, must rest on the decision of your lordship."

"You have spoken to the purpose," said the baron; "but as the matter originated from a mistake, I trust you will not be severe in your demands of justice. Yew," added he, addressing himself to the reve, "have been too precipitate in your proceedings, and have thereby disgraced an innocent man, and hindered him from proceeding where his business called him. The offence is a serious one, and, I hope, such a one as I shall not hear of from you again: in the present case, you shall pay him two angels of gold; the one for the disgrace, and the other for the delay you have occasioned; on condition that, on his part, he will drop all contention and animosity, and friendship shall be restored between you."

"With all my heart," said the little tailor; "your honour says well. By the mass, I never bore malice with any man: so give me your hand, Master Piers; and though I be poor, I am honest. Never look so gloomy, Master Piers; but in future, remember a tailor lives by his goose; and if he will not fight for it, he is a sorry lozel, and deserves the stocks, and a good whipping into the bargain."

In the mean time, the thieves who actually had committed the depredations in Piers's territories, being on the look-out, and hearing the outcry with the tailor, followed them to the green, where learning the circumstances that brought them thither, they conceived this to be a fit opportunity for robbing his

hen-roosts again, which might be safely done in the absence of him and his men; accordingly they proceeded without delay to the Bury-yard, where they made choice of all his best geese, and other poultry, leaving nothing behind but a few old carion, which they did not think worth carrying away.

The reve returned from Marden in a very evil humour, having been at a considerable expense at the ale stake, in plying the tailor with liquor, without obtaining his purpose; and was obliged to pay to him two angels, according to the award of the baron. On his entering his farm-yard, he saw his wife weeping and wailing, and Tib, his maid-servant, wringing her hands, as though they had not been well in their wits: and for some time he could not get any answer from them; but alas! and well-a-day! which brought to his remembrance the burthen of the tailor's song, and was by no means conducive to soften the severity of his temper.

"What," says he, surlily, "means this howling and scowling? is the grey cow dead, or has Strawberry cast her calf?"

At last the old dame cried out, "We are undone, goodman; the ducks, and the geese, and the hens are all gone."

"Stint your noise, you fool," returned he; "the tailor took but one goose, and that was his own."

"The foul fiend take the tailor," said she: "some other false lozels have been here in your absence, have stripped the hen-roosts; the capon-pens are empty; and the old goose and gander, and a hen or two, are all they have left behind. And thus, forsooth, you have watched to good purpose, like an idle lot as you are."

The conclusion of this discourse made Piers more angry than at the loss of his poultry: he therefore set upon his wife with great fury, and beat her soundly; he turned Tib, the maid, away, for her carelessness, and swore at the men for not keeping watch, when he himself had taken them away.

And thus, my gentle masters, ends the story of the tailor and his goose.

The tale being concluded, with the unanimous applause of the rustics, the tapers dropped away one after another, excepting only Tosspot, who having installed the disrou in the comforts of his truckle-bed, returned to finish the night over the beer can, with his drunken host, Hob Filcher.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Gregory discovered, and disgraced.

Gregory, having reached Queenhoo Hall, had the satisfaction of finding that his absence had not been missed; and in order to escape all observation, he withdrew to his apartment. The first thing that occurred to his recollection, upon lying down in the bed, was the loss of the sheet; but he quieted his mind with the supposition that he had left it in the warren, where it might possibly remain unseen by any one until the morning. Accordingly, he rose exceedingly early, and having prevailed upon the porter to unlock the gate sooner than usual, on pretence of having some business of importance to transact, he made the best of his way to the warren, where he traced and retraced the whole circuit of his perambulation, scrutinising every hillock, bush, and brier, but in vain; for the sheet, as the reader well knows, was not to be found there.

He returned to Queenho Hall with a heavy heart, and knew not what excuse he should make to the chamberlain for the deficiency of his bed-linen. When the breakfast-bell rung, he joined the servants in the hall, as though nothing had happened. His comrades, however, thought he was graver than usual; and Gervise, who delighted in teasing him, observed, that his wit was as pointless as a pellet from a popgun; for although it made a great sound, it did no execution.

The crest-fallen jester replied—"This, then, is nearly equal with your understanding, which a pellet from a popgun can easily subvert."

The men of war, having reached their quarters at Welwyn, made themselves merry with recounting the adventure; and he who had taken the sheet, produced the same as a proof of the veracity of their tale.

It happened, that Jack, the basket-maker, who was present at the time, turning it over, recognised the cognisance of the Boteler family wrought with the needle upon it, when turning to the soldier, he advised him to be careful how he disposed of that article; "for," said he, "it belongs to the baron, and was probably stolen by the knave who counterfeited the apparition."

The soldier was disappointed by losing the price, which he had considered as lawfully obtained; but he did not choose to dispute the point, when he heard that it was the property of Lord Boteler, and especially as the host, who had formerly been a servant in the baron's household, confirmed the assertions of the basket-maker. "I will, however," said the innkeeper, "upon my own account, give you a stoup of the best ale in my cellar for the sheet; and I will take care that it shall be returned."

The offer of the host was readily accepted by the man of war; and he and his comrades made merry over the ale, wishing they might meet with such another goblin every night.

The innkeeper, in the morning, determined going to Queenho Hall; but, at the same time, he thought it would be best to take the two soldiers with him; for which reason, having obtained leave of absence from their officer, all three of them went together.

Just before their arrival, the under chamberlain had discovered the loss of the sheet, and made complaint to Oswald, supposing that Gregory had secreted it, by way of jest, to give him the trouble of seeking it. Gregory, on his part, flatly denied any knowledge of it, declaring he had slept all night without it; and said, the under chamberlain ought to be punished for putting such a trick upon him. Oswald was at a loss how to determine the matter; but declared, that the sheet should be found or replaced by one of them.

At this moment the Welwyn innkeeper entered the hall, followed by the two soldiers, whom Gregory instantly recognised. The sight of two real goblins could not have had a more powerful effect upon him: he held down his head, and stood trembling, without being able to say a word more in his own defence, so that Oswald thought he was seized with a fit on a sudden, or was besides his wits, and began to inquire what was the matter with him, when the soldier, who had helped him from the river, readily recollected him, and, coming forward, thrust out his hand, saying, "How dost thou do, my brave acquaintance? by the sword of St. George, I little thought of meeting with my friend the goblin in this gay company. There my jolly ale-drawer," continued he, turning to the innkeeper, "there is the ghost we caused to uncase last night; and he gives me no thanks for pulling him out of the river."

Oswald, and the whole assemblage of the baron's domestics, were greatly astonished at the manner in which the man of war addressed the jester, his speech was perfectly unintelligible to them, and they stood looking, first at the one, and then at the other, without comprehending the least of the matter. With respect to Gregory, he remained speechless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, nor could he devise any way to avoid the disgrace, which of necessity would follow when the transaction became public; at last, however, he recollected himself a little, and replied to the soldier—"I shall do otherwise than thank you, Mr. Bellswagger."

The innkeeper then produced the sheet, which he said the soldiers had found in the warren, and that having found the baron's cognisance marked upon it, they had brought it.

Oswald and the under chamberlain examined the sheet, and both declared that it was the sheet wanting upon the bed of the jester. The production of the sheet added to the surprise of the servants, and Gregory, finding that nothing could prevent the story being made known, making his retreat with great precipitation, ran into his own room, where he fastened the door, and would not open it to any one.

As soon as he was gone, an explanation took place; the soldiers related the story, as far as they knew of it, to the no small diversion of the company, and especially of the pages; Gervise, in particular, declared the jester should not hear the last of it for twice six mors.

After the soldiers had eaten and drank to their hearts' content, and the innkeeper had finished the business which had brought him to Queenho Hall, they returned with satisfaction to Welwyn.

The baron having, in the mean time, a desire to see Gregory, sent for him. The unlucky jester, conceiving that the page, who delivered the message, was imposing on him, to draw him from his hiding-place like a bear to the baiting, refused to quit his station; and in order to pacify the baron, who was angry at not being obeyed, Oswald related to him the circumstance of the sheet, and the reason for his self-confinement. The baron could not refrain from laughing at the ridiculous adventure, and sent Oswald with a positive order for him to come into his presence; which order, after some solicitation on the part of the chamberlain, Gregory complied with, and having learned from Oswald, that the baron was acquainted with the misadventure, he determined to set the best face he could upon it, and trust to his wit, with the assistance of some portion of impudence, to make his peace with the baron.

When he was ushered into the room where Lord Boteler was seated, he bowed very low, and observing that he did not seem to be very angry, he stood back behind the chamberlain, and clapped his fool's-cap upon his head, and thrusting the bauble under his arm, imitated his voice, saying, "I have brought the fool before your lordship."

Oswald's gravity was much discomposed by the wagging of the jester, when casting the cap upon the floor, he turned round shortly, and said, "Be shrew thee, Jack Sauce, but thou art a knave as well as a fool."

"Take back the knave, I prithee," quoth Gregory, "and leave the fool to me; we both know our parts better than to exchange. I have not shrewdness to be a knave, and you, I trow, for lack of wit, would make a sorry fool."

"Sirrah," said the chamberlain, "if right were ordered, you would be sent to the whipping-post."

"I hope your worship there will take the precedence of a poor fool."

"Well, sirrah," said the baron, "I see what you are aiming at; and though you certainly deserve chastisement for your malicious foolery, yet, in consideration of what you have justly suffered in the performance of your new character, I am willing to remit what more may be your due. I advise you, for the future, not to indulge yourself with the like mischievous vagaries, which usually end, as they ever ought to do, in the disgrace of those who pursue them. Let me, therefore, hear no more such complaints of your ill conduct, or certainly you shall have your coat stripped over your ears, and undergo the discipline of a correction-house."

So saying, he withdrew, followed by the chamberlain, and Gregory was left to himself to meditate on the success of his project.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Hunting Party—An Adventure—A Deliverance.

The next morning the bugles were sounded by daybreak in the court of Lord Boteler's mansion, to call the inhabitants from their slumbers, to assist in a splendid chase, with which the baron had resolved to entertain his neighbour Fitzallen, and his noble visitor St. Clere. Peter Lanaret, the falconer, was in the attendance with falcons for the knights, and tewrelets for the ladies, if they should choose to vary their sport from hunting to hawking. Five stout yeomen keepers, with their attendants, called Ragged Robins, all meetly arrayed in Kendal green, with bugles and short hangers by their sides, and quarter-staffs in their hands, led the slow-hounds or brachets, by which the deer were to be put up. Ten brace of gallant greyhounds, each of which was fit to pluck down, singly, the tallest red deer, were led in leashes by an army of Lord Boteler's foresters. The pages, squires, and other attendants of feudal splendour, well attired in their best hunting gear, upon horseback or foot, according to their ranks, with their bear spears, long bows, and cross-bows, were in森ly waiting. A numerous train of yeomen, called in the language of the times retainers, who yearly received a livery coat, and a small pension for their attendance on such solemn occasions, appeared in cassocks of blue, bearing upon their arms the cognizance of the house of Boteler, as a badge of their adherence. They were the tallest men of their bands that the neighbouring villages could supply, with every man his good buckler on his shoulder, and a bright burnished broadsword dangling from his leather belt. On this occasion, they acted as rangers for beating up the thickets, and rousing the game. These attendants filled up the court of the castle, spacious as it was. On the green without, you might have seen the motley assemblage of peasants convened by report of the splendid hunting, including most of our old acquaintances from Tewin; as well as the jolly partakers of good cheer at Hob Filchers. Gregory, the jester, it may well be guessed, had no great mind to exhibit himself in public, after his recent disaster; but Oswald, the steward, a great formalist in whatever concerned the exhibition of his master's household estate, had positively enjoined his attendance. "What!" quoth he, "will the house of the noble Lord Boteler, an old

day as this, be without a fool? Certes, the good Lord St. Clere, and his fair lady sister, might think our housekeeping as niggardly as that of their churlish kinsman at Gay Bowers, who sent his father's jester to the hospital, sold the poor sooth's bells for hawk-jesses, and made a nightcap of his long eared bonnet. And, sirrah, let me see thee fool handsomely speak squibs and crackers, instead of that dry, barren, musty gibing, which thou hast used of late, or by the bones! the porter shall have thee to his ledge, and cob thee with thine own wooden sword, till thy skin is as motley as thy doublet."

To this stern injunction, Gregory made no reply, any more than to the courteous offer of old Albert Drawslot, the chief park-keeper, who proposed to blow vinegar in his nose, to sharpen his wit, as he had done that blessed morning to Bragger, the old hound, whose scent was failing. There was indeed little time for reply, for the bugles, after a lively flourish, were now silent, and Peretto, with his two attendant minstrels, stepping beneath the windows of the strangers' apartments, joined in the following roundelay, the deep voices of the rangers and falconers making up a chorus, that caused the very battlements to ring again:—

Waken lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain daws the day ;
All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk and horse, and hunting spears ;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling ;
Merrily, merrily, mingle they—
Waken lords and ladies gay.

Waken lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain grey—
Springlets in the dawn are streaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming ;
And foresters have busy been,
To track the buck in thicket green ;
Now we come to chaunt our lay,
Waken lords and ladies gay.

Waken lords and ladies gay,
Te the green wood haste away ;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size ;
We can shew the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers freyed ;
You shall see him brought to bay—
Waken lords and ladies gay.

Louder, louder chaunt the lay,
Waken lords and ladies gay !
Tell them youth, and mirth, and glee,
Run a course as well as we ;
Time, stern huntsman ! who can baulk,
Stanch a hound, and fleet as hawk ;
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.

By the time this lay was finished, Lord Boteler, with his daughter and kinsmen, Fitzallen of Mardon, and other noble guests, had mounted their palfreys, and the hunt set forward in due order. The huntsmen, having carefully observed the traces of a large stag in the preceding evening, were able, without loss of time, to conduct the company, by the marks which they had made upon the trees, to the side of the thicket, in which, by the report of Drawslot, he had harboured all night. The horsemen spreading themselves along the side of the thicket, and

the keeper uttered, leaving his hounds, a large blood-hound, tied in a leam or band, from which he takes his name. But it befell thus. A hart of the second year, which was in the same cover with the proper object of their pursuit, chanced to be unthoroughed first, and broke cover very near where the Lady Emma and her brother were stationed. An unexperienced varlet who was nearer to them, instantly unloosed two tall greyhounds, who sprung after the fugitive, with all the fleetness of the north wind. Gregory, restored a little to spirits by the enlivening scene around him, followed, encouraging the hounds with a loud *bayouf*, for which he had the hearty curses of the huntsmen, as well as of the baron, who entered into the spirit of the chase with all the juvenile ardour of twenty. "May the foul fiend, booted and spur'd, ride down his bewailing-throat, with a scythe at his girdle," quoth Albert Drawalot; "here have I been telling him, that all the marks were those of a buck of the first head, and he has holloed the hounds upon a velvet-headed knobbler. By St. Hubert, if I break not his pate with my cross-bow, may I never cast off hound more! But to it, my lords and master, the noble beast is here yet, and thank the saints we have enough of hounds." The cover being now thoroughly beat by the attendants, the stag was compelled to abandon it, and retreat to his speed for his safety. Three greyhounds were slipped upon him, whom he threw out, after running a couple of miles, by entering an extensive furzy brake, which extended along the side of a hill. The horsemen soon came up, and casting off a sufficient number of slow hounds, sent them with the prickers into the cover, in order to drive the game from his strength. This object being accomplished, afforded another severe chase of several miles, in a direction almost circular, during which the poor animal tried every wile to get rid of his persecutors. He crossed and traversed all such stony paths as were likely to retain the least scent of his footsteps; he laid himself close to the ground, drawing his feet under his belly and clasping his nose close to the earth, lest he should be betrayed to the hounds by his breath and hoofs. When all was in vain, and he found the hounds coming fast in upon him, his own strength failing, his mouth embossed with foam, and the tears dropping from his eyes, he turned in despair upon his pursuers, who then stood at gaze, making an hideous clamour, and awaiting their two-footed auxiliaries. Of these, it chanced that the Lady Eleanor, taking more pleasure in the sport than Matilda, and being a less burden to her palfrey than the Lord Boteler, was the first who arrived at the spot; and taking a cross-bow from an attendant, discharged a bolt at the stag. When the infuriated animal felt himself wounded, he pushed frantically towards her, from whom he had received the shaft; and Lady Eleanor might have had occasion to repent of her enterprise, had not young Fitzallen, who had kept near her during the whole day, at that instant galloped briskly in, and the stag could change his object of assault, dispatched him with his short hunting sword.

Albert Drawalot, who had just come up in terror for the young lady's safety, broke out into loud encomiums upon Fitzallen's strength and gallantry. "By'r lady," said he, taking off his cap and wiping his sun-burned face with his sleeve, "well struck, and in good time! But now, boys, doff your bonnets, and sound the mort."

The sportsmen then sounded a treble mort, and set up a general whoop, which, mingled with the yelping of the dogs, made the welkin ring again. The hunts-

men then offered his knife to Lord Boteler, that he might take the *ay* of the deer, but the baron courteously insisted upon Fitzallen going through the ceremony.

The Lady Matilda was now come up, with most of the attendants; and the interest of the chase being ended, it excited some surprise that neither St. Clare nor his sister made their appearance. The Lord Boteler commanded the horns again to sound the *rechot*, in hopes to call in the stragglers, and said to Fitzallen, "Methought St. Clare, so distinguished for service in war, should have been more forward in the chase."

"I trow," said Peter Lanaret, "I know the reason of the noble lord's absence; for when that moon, calf Gregory holloed the dogs upon the knobbler, and galloped like a green hilding, as he is, after them, I saw the Lady Emma's palfrey follow apace after that varlet, who should be thrashed for over-running, and I think her noble brother has followed her, lest she should come to harm. But here, by the rood, is Gregory to answer for himself."

At this moment Gregory entered the circle, which had been formed round the deer, out of breath, and his face covered with blood. He kept for some time uttering inarticulate cries of "Harrow!" and "Well-away," and other exclamations of distress and terror, pointing all the while to a thicket at some distance from the spot where the deer had been killed.

"By my honour," said the baron, "I would gladly know who has dared to array the poor knave thus; and I trust he should dearly abyse his outreendance, were he the best, save one, in England."

Gregory, who had now found more breath, cried, "Help, an ye be men! Save Lady Emma and her brother, whom they are murdering in Brokenthurst thicket."

This put all in motion. Lord Boteler hastily commanded a small party of his men to abide for the defence of the ladies, while he himself, Fitzallen, and the rest, made what speed they could towards the thicket, guided by Gregory, who for that purpose was mounted behind Fabian. Paching through a narrow path, the first object they encountered was a man of small stature lying on the ground, mastered and almost strangled by two dogs, which were instantly recognised to be those that had accompanied Gregory. A little farther was an open space, where lay three bodies of dead or wounded men: beside these was Lady Emma, apparently lifeless, her brother and a young forester bending over and endeavouring to recover her. By employing the usual remedies, this was soon accomplished; while Lord Boteler, astonished at such a scene, anxiously inquired of St. Clare the meaning of what he saw, and whether more danger was to be expected?

"For the present, I trust not," said the young warrior, whom they now observed was slightly wounded; "but I pray you, of your nobleness, let the woods here be searched; for we were assaulted by four of these base assassins, and I only see three on the sward."

The attendants now brought forward the person whom they had rescued from the dogs, and Henry, with disgust, shame, and astonishment, recognised his kinsman, Gaston St. Clare. This discovery he communicated in a whisper to Lord Boteler; who commanded the prisoner to be conveyed to Queenhoo Hall, and closely guarded. Meanwhile he anxiously inquired of young St. Clare about his wound.

"A scratch, a trifle!" cried Henry; "I am in less haste to bide it than to introduce to you one, without whose aid that of the leech would have come too

late. Where is he? where is my brave deliverer?" "Here, most noble lord," said Gregory, sliding from the palfrey, and stepping forward, "ready to receive the guerdon which your bounty would heap on him."

"Truly, friend Gregory," answered the young warrior, "thou shalt not be forgotten, for thou didst run speedily, and roar manfully for aid, without which I think verily we had not received it. But the brave forester, who came to my rescue when these three ruffians had nigh overpowered me, where is he?"

Every one looked around; but though all had seen him on entering the thicket, he was not now to be found. They could only conjecture that he had retired during the confusion occasioned by the detection of Gaston.

"Seek not for him," said the Lady Emma, who had now in some degree recovered her composure; "he will not be found of mortal, unless at his own season."

The baron, convinced from this answer that her terror had, for the time, somewhat disturbed her reason, forbore to question her, and Matilda and Eleanor, to whom a messenger had been dispatched with the result of this strange adventure, arriving, they took the Lady Emma between them, and all in a body returned to the castle.

The distance was, however, considerable, and, before reaching it, they had another alarm. The prickers, who rode foremost in the troop, halted, and announced to the Lord Boteler, that they perceived advancing towards them a body of armed men. The followers of the baron were numerous, but they were arrayed for the chase, not for battle; and it was with great pleasure that he discerned on the peanon of the advancing body of men-at arms, instead of the cognisance of Gaston, as he had some reason to expect, the friendly bearings of Fitzosborne of Diggawell, the same young lord who was present at the May-games with Fitzallen of Marden. The knight himself advanced, sheathed in armour, and, without raising his visor, informed Lord Boteler, that having heard of a base attempt made upon a part of his train by ruffianly assassins, he had mounted and armed a small party of his retainers, to escort them to Queenhoo Hall. Having received and accepted an invitation to attend them thither, they prosecuted their journey in confidence and security, and arrived safe at home without any further accident.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Investigation of the Adventure of the Hunting—A Discovery—Gregory's Manhood—Fate of Gaston St. Clere—Conclusion.

So soon as they arrived at the princely mansion of Boteler, the Lady Emma craved permission to retire to her chamber, that she might compose her spirits after the terror she had undergone. Henry St. Clere, in a few words, proceeded to explain the adventure to the curious audience:— "I had no sooner seen my sister's palfrey, in spite of her endeavours to the contrary, entering with spirit into the chase set on foot by the wor-

shipful Gregory, than I rode after to give her assistance. So long was the chase, that when the greyhounds pulled down the knobbler, we were out of hearing of your bugles; and having rewarded and coupled the dogs, I gave them to be led by the jester, and we wandered in quest of our company, whom it would seem the sport had led in a different direction. At length, passing through the thicket where you found us, I was surprised by a cross-bow bolt whizzing by mine head. I drew my sword, and rushed into the thicket, but was instantly assailed by two ruffians, while other two made towards my sister and Gregory. The poor knave fled, crying for help, pursued by my false kinsman, now your prisoner; and the designs of the other on my poor Emma (murderous no doubt), were prevented by the sudden apparition of a brave woodsman, who, after a short encounter, stretched the miscreant at his feet, and came to my assistance. I was already slightly wounded, and nearly overladen with odds. The combat lasted some time, for the caitiffs were both well armed, strong, and desperate; at length, however, we had each mastered our antagonist, when your retinue, my Lord Boteler, arrived to my relief. So ends my story; but, by my knighthood, I would give an earl's ransom to thank the gallant forester by whose aid I live to tell it."

"Fear not," said Lord Boteler; "he shall be found, if this or the four adjacent counties hold him. And now Lord Fitzosborne will be pleased to doff the armour he has so kindly assumed for our sakes, and we will all bowne ourselves for the banquet."

When the hour of dinner approached, the Lady Matilda and her cousin visited the chamber of the fair Darcy. They found her in a composed but melancholy posture. She turned the discourse upon the misfortunes of her life, and hinted, that having recovered her brother, and seeing him look forwards to the society of one who would amply repay to him the loss of her's, she had thoughts of dedicating her remaining life to Heaven, by whose providential interference it had been so often preserved.

Matilda coloured deeply at something in this speech, and her cousin inveighed loudly against Emma's resolution. "Ah my dear Lady Eleanor," replied she, "I have, to-day, witnessed what I cannot but judge a supernatural visitation, and to what end can it call me but to give myself to the altar? That peasant who guided me to Baddow, through the park of Danbury, the same who appeared before me, at different times, and in different forms, during that eventful journey—that youth, whose features are imprinted on my memory, is the very individual forester who this day rescued us in the forest. I cannot be mistaken; and connecting these marvelous appearances with the spectres which I saw while at Gay Bowers, I cannot resist the conviction, that Heaven has permitted my guardian angel to assume mortal shape for my relief and protection."

The fair cousins, after exchanging looks which implied a fear that her mind was wandering, answered her in soothing terms, and finally prevailed upon her to accompany them to the banqueting-hall. Here the first person they encountered was the Baron Fitzosborne of Diggawell, now divested of his armour; at the sight of whom the Lady Emma changed colour, and exclaiming, "It

is the same!" sunk senseless into the arms of Matilda.

"She is bewildered by the terrors of the day," said Eleanor; "and we have done ill in obliging her to descend."

"And I," said Fitzosborne, "have done madly in presenting before her one, whose presence must recall moments the most alarming in her life."

While the ladies supported Emma from the hall, Lord Boteler and St. Clere requested an explanation from Fitzosborne of the words he had used.

"Trust me, gentle lords," said the Baron of Diggswell, "ye shall have what ye demand, when I learn that Lady Emma Darcy has not suffered from my imprudence."

At this moment Lady Matilda returning, said, that her fair friend, on her recovery, had calmly and deliberately insisted that she had seen Fitzosborne before, in the most dangerous crisis of her life. "I dread," said she, "her disordered mind connects all that her eye beholds with the terrible passages that she has witnessed."

"Nay," said Fitzosborne, "if noble St. Clere can pardon the unauthorised interest which, with the purest and most honourable intentions, I have taken in his sister's fate, it is easy for me to explain this mysterious impression."

He proceeded to say, that, happening to be in the hostelry, called the Griffin, near Baddow, while upon a journey in that country, he had met with the old nurse of the Lady Emma Darcy, who, being just expelled from Gay Bowers, was in the height of her grief and indignation, and made loud and public proclamation of Lady Emma's wrongs. From the description she gave of the beauty of her foster-child, as well as from the spirit of chivalry, Fitzosborne became interested in her fate. This interest was deeply enhanced when, by a bribe to old Gaunt, the reve, he procured a view of the Lady Emma, as she walked near the Castle of Gay Bowers. The aged churl refused to give him access to the castle; yet dropped some hints, as if he thought the lady in danger, and wished she were well out of it. "His master," he said, "had heard she had a brother in life, and since that deprived him of all chance of gaining her domains by purchase, he—" in short, Gaunt wished they were safely separated. "If any injury," quoth he, "should happen to the damsel here, it were ill for us all. I tried, by an innocent stratagem, to frighten her from the castle, by introducing a figure through a trap-door, and warning her, as if by a voice from the dead, to retreat from hence; but the gilet is wifful, and is running upon her fate."

Finding Gaunt, although covetous and communicative, too faithful a servant to his wicked master to take any active steps against his commands, Fitzosborne applied himself to old Urseley, whom he found more tractable. Through her he learned the dreadful plot Gaston had laid to rid himself of his kinswoman, and resolved to effect her deliverance. But aware of the delicacy of Emma's situation, he charged Urseley to conceal from her the interest he took in her distress, resolving to watch over her in disguise, until he saw her in a place of safety. Hence the appearance he made before her in various dresses during her journey, in the course of which he was never far distant; and had always four stout yeomen within hearing of his bugle, had as-

sistance been necessary. When she was placed in safety at the lodge, it was Fitzosborne's intention to have prevailed upon his sisters to visit, and take her under their protection; but he found them absent from Diggswell, having gone to attend an aged relation, who lay dangerously ill in a distant county. They did not return until the day before the May-games; and the other events followed too rapidly to permit Fitzosborne to lay any plan for introducing them to Lady Emma Darcy. On the day of the chase, he resolved to preserve his romantic disguise, and attend the Lady Emma as a forester, and partly to have the pleasure of being near her, and partly to judge whether, according to an idle report in the country, she favoured his friend and comrade, Fitzallen, of Marden. This last motive, it may easily be believed, he did not declare to the company. After the skirmish with the ruffians, he waited till the baron and the huntsmen arrived, and then, still doubting the farther designs of Gaston, hastened to his castle, to arm the band which had escorted them to Queenhoo Hall.

Fitzosborne's story being finished, he received the thanks of all the company, particularly of St. Clere, who felt deeply the respectful delicacy with which he had conducted himself towards his sister. The lady was carefully informed of her obligation to him; and it is left to the well-judging reader, whether even the raillery of Lady Eleanor made her regret, that Heaven had only employed natural means for her security, and that the guardian angel was converted into a handsome, gallant, and enamoured knight.

The joy of the company in the hall extended to the buttery, where Gregory narrated such feats of arms done by himself in the fray of the morning, as might have shamed Bevys and Guy of Warwick. He was, according to his narrative, singled out for destruction by the gigantic baron himself, while he abandoned to meeker hands the destruction of St. Clere and Fitzosborne. "But certes," said he, "the foul paynim met his match; for ever as I foined at me with his brand, I parried his blows with my bauble, and closing with him upon the third veny, threw him to the ground, and made him cry recreant to an unarmed man."

"Tush, man," said Drawslot, "thou forgettest thy best auxiliaries, the good greyhounds, Help and Holdfast! I warrant thee, that when the humpbacked baron caught thee by the cowl, which he had almost torn off, thou hadst been in a fair plight had they not remembered an old friend, and come into the rescue. Why, man, I found them fastened on him myself; and there was odd staving and stickling to make them 'ware haunch!" Their mouths were full of the flex, for I pulled a piece of the garment from them. I warrant thee, that when they brought him to ground, thou fliest like a frightened pricket."

"And as for Gregory's gigantic paynim," said Fabian, "why he lies yonder in the guard-room, the very size, shape, and colour of a spider in a yew-hedge."

"It is false!" said Gregory; "Colbrand, the Dane, was a dwarf to him."

"It is as true," returned Fabian, "as that the tinker is to be married, on Tuesday, to pretty Margery. Gregory, thy sheet hath brought them between a pair of blankets."

"I care no more for such a gillfiirt," said the jester, "than I do for thy leasings. Marry, thou

Stop, stop my thumb; happy wouldst thou be could thy head reach the captive ban's a-girdle.

"By the mass," said Peter Lanaret, "I will have one peep at this bairly gallant;" and, leaving the battery, he went to the guard-room, whence Gaston St. Clere was confined. A man-at-arms, who kept sentinel on the strong-studded door of the apartment, said he believed he slept; for that after raging, stamping, and uttering the most horrible imprecations, he had been of late perfectly still. The falconer gently drew back a sliding board, of a foot square, towards the top of the door, which covered a hole of the same size, strongly latticed, through which the warden, without opening the door, could look in upon his prisoner. From this aperture he beheld the wretched Gaston suspended by the neck, by his own girdle, to an iron ring in the side of his prison. He had clambered to it by means of the table on which his food had been placed, and in the agonies of shame, and disappointed malice, had adopted this mode of ridding himself of a wretched life. He was found yet warm, but totally lifeless. A proper account of the manner of his death was drawn up and certified. He was buried that evening, in the chapel of the castle, out of respect to his high birth; and the chaplain of Fitzallen of Marden, who said the service upon the occasion, preached, the next Sunday, an excellent sermon upon the text, *Radix malorum est cupiditas*, which we have here transcribed—

[Here the manuscript, from which we have painfully transcribed, and frequently, as it were, translated this tale, for the reader's edification, is so indistinct and defaced, that, excepting certain *houblots, nathlasses, to ye's! &c.*, we can pick out little that is intelligible, saving that avarice is defined "a likquishness of heart after earthly things." A little farther, there seems to have been a gay account of Margery's wedding with Ralph the tasker; the running at the quintain, and other rural games practised on the occasion. There are also fragments of a mock sermon preached by Gregory upon that occasion, as for example:]

"My dear cursed caitiffs, there was once a king, and he wedded a young old queen, and she had a child; and this child was sent to Solomon the Sage, praying he would give it the same blessing which he got from the witch of Endor, when she bit him by the heel. Hereof speaks the worthy Dr. Radigundus Potator: why should not mass be said for all the roasted shoe souls served up in the king's dish on Saturday; for true it is that St. Peter asked father Adam, as they journeyed to Camelot, an high, great, and doubtful question, "Adam, Adam, why eatest thou the apple without paring?"

[With much goodly gibberish to the same effect; which display of Gregory's ready wit not only threw the whole company into convulsions of laughter, but made such an impression on Rose, the potter's daughter, that it was thought it would be the jester's own fault if Jack was long without his Jill. Much pithy matter concerning the bringing the bride to bed, the losing the bridegroom's points, the scramble which ensued for them, and the casting of the stocking, is also omitted, from its obscurity.

The following song, which has been since bor-

rowed by the worshipful author of the famous "History of Fryar Bacon," has been, with difficulty, deciphered. It seems to have been sung on occasion of carrying home the bride.

BRIDAL SONG.

To the tune of "I have been a Fiddler," &c.

And did you not hear of a mirth besel
The morrow after a wedding day,
And carrying a bride at home to dwell;
And away to Tewin, away, away.

The quintain was set, and the garlands were made—
"Tis pity old customs should ever decay;
And woe be to him that was hors'd on a jade,
For he carried no credit away, away.

We met a consort of fiddle de dees;
We set them a cockhorse, and made them play
The winning of Bullen, and Upsey Fires,
And away to Tewin, away, away.

There was ne'er a lad in all the parish
That would go to the plough that day;
But on his fore horse his wench he carries,
And away to Tewin, away, away.

The butler was quick, and the ale he did tap,
The maidens did make the chamber full gay;
The servants did give me a fuddling cup,
And I did carry't away, away.

The smith of the town his liquor so took,
That he was persuaded the ground looked blue;
And I dare boldly be sworn on a book,
Such smiths as he there's but a few.

A posset was made, and the women did sip,
And simpering said, they could eat no more;
Full many a maiden was laid on the lip—
I'll say no more, but give o'er (give o'er).

But what our fair readers will chiefly regret, is the loss of three declarations of love: the first by St. Clere to Matilda; which, with the lady's answer, occupies fifteen closely-written pages of manuscript. That of Fitzosborne to Emma is not much shorter; but the amours of Fitzallen and Eleanor, being of a less romantic cast, are closed in three pages only. The three noble couples were married in Queenhoo Hall, upon the same day, being the twentieth Sunday after Easter. There is a prolix account of the marriage-feast, of which we can pick out the names of a few dishes, such as petrel, crane, sturgeon, swan, &c. &c., with a profusion of wild fowl and venison. We also see, that a suitable song was produced by Peretto on the occasion; and that the bishop, who blessed the bridal beds which received the happy couple, was no niggard of holy water, bestowing half a gallon upon each of the couches. We regret we cannot give these curiosities to the reader in detail, but we hope to expose the manuscript to abler antiquaries, so soon as it shall be framed and glazed by the ingenious artist who rendered that service to Mr. Ireland's Shakespeare MSS. And so (being unable to lay aside the style to which our pen is habituated) gentle reader, we bid thee heartily farewell.]

END OF QUEENHOO HALL.

THE IRISH LORD LIEUTENANT AND HIS DOUBLE.

It is really quite true that some time ago, and not long ago either, there was a London gentleman, who took a strange fit of ambition into his head. His partial friends, or himself alone of his own accord, or he, in concert with them, believed that he bore, in face, air, and even in the upper part of his figure, a striking resemblance to a certain nobleman, who had become highly distinguished in the annals of fame by brilliant qualities of various kinds. In truth, there was a likeness, but a general one only, between him and the celebrated Duke (or Marquis—at present we cannot declare which ought to be the proper title), and, highly flattered by this personal compliment of nature, he did all in his power to seem "the very image." He studied his original as closely as the nobleman's appearance in public, in the streets, in the parks, in "the house," gave him opportunities for doing so; and, in consequence of his observations, he changed his elongated hat for one of a round fashion, and his light hair for a sandy-coloured, or haphazard, (for we hate being demonstrative as he himself was) a raven-black wig; he instructed his tailor how to cut his coat; he spent hours before his glass, practising the very tie of his neckcloth—to say nothing of the other hours occupied, by its aid, in trying to imitate a bow, a smile, a turn of the lip, or a droop or a toss of the head. But, although much was gained by all these adaptations and labours, something yet remained to be done, in order to procure a public and general misconception of who he was: for the Double's great longing consisted of a wish to have people gaze after him in the streets, in proof of how well he enacted his mute lie; and here (as regarded self-exhibition in the streets) lay his difficulty. At home, indeed, or in the houses of his particular friends, while he sat quietly at table, he succeeded amazingly well, because, in fact, in a sitting posture, you could not so easily detect that his figure was considerably shorter than the noble one of his supposed counterpart; but one cannot well sit down, out of doors, in a thronged metropolis; unless, indeed, one sits in a saddle, on horseback, and even if one could do the former-mentioned feat, it were of no avail in this particular case, inasmuch as the man to be cheated out of the admiration due exclusively to his own person, never did it; and as to sitting in a saddle, our gentleman had no saddle, not to talk of a horse's back to put it on. Truth must out,

although "a real gentleman," the high prices at which human existence, with a reasonable share of enjoyment superadded, must be purchased in London, had deterred his hitherto economical and rational mind from attempting the keep of a steed worthy of being seen in and about the great city.

But what will not high ambition endeavour on the road to its object? The Double, after pondering the matter some time, started off, after breakfast, one morning, to scrutinise the studs of sundry livery-stables, of respectable character, though reasonable charges; and with a vivid recollection in his mind of the often-contemplated horse most usually ridden about town by his own original, he selected, before dinner, an excellent likeness of the animal, and hired it for two days in each week, at not a very extravagant price. And now, if ever a man were on his hobby-horse, surely he was on his; and twice every week, for months afterwards, we have seen him, at fashionable hours, walking or trotting, nay, even galloping, his new acquisition, up and down Piccadilly, and by Hyde Park Corner into Grosvenor-place, and about the Parks, and where not; and veritable attention did they both draw from individuals of the passing crowds, who, having never seen the true man and horse anywhere but in the open air, were promptly imposed upon; nor is that all, but once or twice in the Ring in Hyde Park, we, and others along with us—(for, at the time we speak of, he was beginning to be blown among us knowing ones, as Master Shallow might say)—have seen him bowed, or smiled, or kissed finger-tips to, out of carriages which he rapidly passed in the direction opposite to their motion; and, oh, intoxicating spirit of fame! what a happy glow did not those palpable hits impart to the countenance of the successful aspirant! Indeed, it cannot be guessed by what process of reasoning (to say little of feeling) he thus deemed himself honoured in his own mind, on account of only being mistaken for a celebrated person. What then were the grounds upon which the poor Double so anxiously would have disengaged his identity? (so anxiously indeed, that we do believe he was ready and willing to sell himself to the devil, as Doctor Faustus did, could the bargain have ensured to him as perfect a change into the likeness he thirsted after, as was the change from youth-to-age ensured to the doctor by his bargain).

But 'tis useless multiplying questions or conjectures on the subject ; we only know that, in a vein of perfect consistency, he was nearly as proud of the deception practised by his hired horse, as of that toiled after himself ; that he often wished the poor brute were conscious of the laurels he had gained ; and that (wiping his brows with a handkerchief in a way he had once seen his better self do) he has been heard to say, after returning from a day's exhibition about town, " I do own myself grateful and proud for having been cast in the same mould with that great man ! "

And so far, for months as has been said, he passed a very happy life ; when suddenly there arose a prospect of great interruption to the gathering of the triumphs of his deceptive existence. It is clear that if the nobleman were known to have left London, he could scarce hope to make people go on believing that he was still in London ; unless, indeed, he wished to frighten passengers in the streets out of their senses, by being taken for the wraith or fetch of the absent public character. In fact, to continue in the glory of the occasional doubt that he was somebody else, the Double was necessarily chained to the place, though not to the spot of the place, inhabited by that somebody : and considerable, therefore, were his anxieties, and regrets, and sense of humiliation, when he read in the papers that the noble and gallant —, of —, was to go over immediately to Ireland as its Vice-King, or Lord Lieutenant.

True, the high appointment flattered his vanity, in a kind of personal way. He felt it as an additional homage very nearly paid to himself ; and strongly was he tempted to spend the summer, at least, in the Irish metropolis, in the hope of coming in for his just share of the usual public, that is street, worship, to be paid to the representative of royalty. But then, first of all, he feared, if he did not dislike, the Irish ; and they were at that time more to be feared than ever, many of the counties of their country being in 'open insurrection, famine, and typhus fever. And next, what was he to do for his well-esteemed horse in Dublin ? he could not think of purchasing him,—the price was too much even for ambition to pay, taking purse into account ; but by no other arrangement could he prevail on the owner of the livery-stables to allow the distinguished animal to float within view of Ireland's Eye—(the little island so called in the bay of Dublin) : and, in a word, (and, alas !) the newly-appointed Vice-King sailed for his Irish capital, while his disconsolate Double remained, still torn by indecision, in London.

Scarce a month had elapsed, however, after the Lord Lieutenant's arrival in the land (sometimes) of potatoes, when the good folks of Dublin began to be puzzled, as their brethren of London had been, by the vision of his copyist, riding about the main streets, or along the beautiful quays, or in the Phoenix Park ; the horse, too, whether the London one or not, being a very good similitude. One fortunate circumstance was in favour of our adventurer. The Lord Lieutenant (though he stuck no great bunch of shamrock in his hat or on his breast, and pointed at, or pressed his hand upon it, as some people had done before him) was beginning to be very popular, in consequence of a mode of conduct, as manly, and as suitable to his nature, as it was good in policy. In truth, from almost the day of his arrival, he had thrown himself upon the confidence of the people, asking the

higher classes of them to share his hospitality, or good-humouredly sharing theirs ; and showing himself in public, with the least ostentation possible, to the other classes. To come to our point : he began soon to ride through the streets, very often quite alone ; and here, it will be perceived, was the circumstance in favour of his untired and untiring mimic of which we have already spoken. Here was the Vice-Sovereign in a situation susceptible of perfect imitation by one man and horse ; and it is quite true that the lonely impostor sometimes succeeded to his heart's content in consequence ; hats and caps were taken off to him by men and boys at either side of the streets, as he rode along, bowing and smiling to a degree of similarity only conferable by long practice ; and having heard that the mixed adoration and self-esteem had alighted one day at the door of a pastry-cook's chop, and chatted amiably with the pretty girl behind the counter, he also did dismount at the door of another shop of the same kind, and did also overwhelm with a sense of being inexpressibly honoured and lifted out of herself, the not as pretty handmaiden of the rival establishment ; and after all this, he would steal away, horse and self, to deposit the former in his livery-stable, and then win, by curvaceous and unfrequented ways, his own humble lodgings, and sit down, a delighted man, to his chop or his steak, not now playing the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to his orderly landlady or her smoke-dried daughter ; though indeed it added to his notions of self-consequence in the house, to hear them begin to say—even while he strove to disrobe himself of the character—"how very like he was."

But his happiness was again doomed to be sadly interrupted. It was announced that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland would speedily set out on a tour through some of the counties in Ireland, and some of the disturbed ones too ! For all the reasons—and more with them—given for his internal troubles when he heard of the intended voyage from London to Dublin, he felt agitated anew. Doubtless, the Irish he had met with in Dublin itself were not so much to be dreaded as he had laid the thing down in his own mind ; but the barbarians of the insurrectionary and remote quarters of the country ! the savages, whooping among their hills and bogs, with scythes and pikes in their hands ! His soul, although nothing of its darling thirst for renown had abated, shrunk from such a prospect of peril. Besides, would there be much glory, worthy of the name, to be gained by the mistakes of his person committed by the populace of small towns or villages, or by peasants on the road-side, even supposing he should escape danger ? Yes ! and a new and brilliant ray of future fame flashed on his soul. Yes ! by some happy combination of circumstances, in his character of Lord Lieutenant, he, also—and he, really—might allay an Irish rebellion, or stanch the wounds of civil discord. But fears, deadly fears, came on him again. His horse, too, as in a former case ? In truth, we must a second time part from him undecided, and a prey to conflicting wishes and doubts, longings and terrors ; and in the mean time, after some other things, let us occupy ourselves a little with his reality.

This was not a year of rank insurrection in any of the usually disturbed (that is, starving) districts of Ireland. Great outrages were not

committed by the neglected, uneducated, and despairing peasantry. The chief feature of their refractory spirit for the season, was evinced in combinations and determinations not to cut down the corn of any of their landowners, no matter of what degree, who, during the speechifying of a recent election, we believe, had thought proper to give them rather hard words.

"An' so, we're not as much as to lay a finger on the poor cap'n's whate, ather, Con?" asked one of a body of legislators among them, who were assembled by stealth, at a late hour of the night, in an old barn, for the purpose of organising the rebellious proceedings of the next day;—it will be understood that the querist spoke in a tone of mock compassion for "the poor cap'n," while his features expressed a bitter sneer.

"The divile a grain of it 'ill ever lie in shape wid help from our holy Roman reaping-hooks. Micky, ma-bouchal," answered Con, who might be termed chairman of their committee of public safety, though, indeed, he was only squatted on a thin lair of old straw, accidentally found in the empty barn.

"Och, an' its like, if we don't cut it for him, that he'll be forced to send a little way to the north for the nate Orange hands," remarked a third,—"because, ye see boys, we're only all a set o' the base-brutes o' Romans that's to be found about him, in these parts, and that he said, out afore all the gentlemen, th' other day, weren't fit to be touched wid a pair o' tongs, so we weren't, the Lord look down on us!"

"Amin," assented Micky—"an' since if he can stop his nose at us afore the whate is ripe, he can do widout us when it's ready to shell itself about the fields."

"That's a truth," said another—"an', sure, when the people that God plaised to put in a country, aren't fit to cut the harvest that God put in it too, why, thin, the capt'n must only thry to send for the Orangemen, the few hundred miles, as my gossip here told ye afore me or else see how many rale, honest boys, like 'em, he'll be able to get in the barony."

"An' they're asily counted," resumed Con, the chairman,—"four of 'em, all in a lump; ould Spear, wid the head shakin' on his shoulders, like the last leaf on the top of a papalar—he that cries 'amin' to his reverence, the minister, in the church, every Sunday,—ould Spear, I say, is one; thru there's the two Hucks, brothers, the wavers; the only bodies that hears ould Spear in the church, or does be there to hear him, barrin' the minister's own wife and chilider, and the capt'n himself, long life to him—an' to his whate, too—the Hucks is—stop—ould Spear is one—yes—the two Hucks is three—creatura so worn away with the shuttles, and goin' in wiather to a coul church, that—but look up there boys!" cried the speaker, suddenly interrupting himself as he stared towards the roof of the barn. The eyes of all the other rebels followed his, and fixed upon the face of a man which was visible through a rent in the thatch, and which earnestly regarded them.

"It's Connor's, the informer!" shouted Micky—"out wid us, boys, an' let us give him what some of us owes him, at last!"

"I'm no Conners, and I'm no informer," said the man overhead. "Stop where ye are, boys, and look at my fatures again."

"By the mortal man!" cried one of the con-

spirators, a young, taciturn, sad-browed fellow, who previously had not uttered a word, though he now spoke with remarkable liveliness of voice and manner, as he sprang from his primitive seat on his heels by the rough wall of the building—"By the mortal man, an' he says threue! It's poor Ned Cahill is in it, if he's a livin' man this night."

"You're not far off from the mark, Peery O'Dea," replied the intruder; "and, now that you're sure o'me, won't you and the other boys let me drop down among ye, to discourse one word?" He prepared to descend through the aperture as he spoke. His face disappeared from it; his legs, his body, took the place of the former—then he swung an instant by the hands from the rude joists of the roof, and saying, "It's the same way some people 'ud like to see me hangin', boys"—he alighted firmly on his outspread feet, in the middle of the earthen floor of the barn. There was ease, agility, and boldness in all his motions while accomplishing this not unperilous descent; and now the rushlight which illumined the council of the disaffected Irish showed the person of a slight-limbed man of thirty, or thereabouts, with broad chest and shoulders, and a well favoured face, of which the only disagreeable expression was the suspicious curl of the brow, and the sidelong quick glance of the eye.

"Musha, my poor fellow! poor Ned!" resumed Peery O'Dea, hastening to him, and there were tears in Peery's eyes, and a tremor in his limbs, while they interchanged the usual salute—kissing each other's cheeks as they held each other's hands. The other peasants looked on, with various expressions of countenance. Some showed sympathy; some anxiety, perhaps for themselves; and one or two regarded the new comer as if forming a selfish resolution towards him.

"And how is Nelly, ma-bouchal?" demanded Ned Cahill.

"The only suster o' yees is brave an' hearty," answered Peery O'Dea, "if it was not for thinkin' a great daile about you, Ned. an' crying, morain', noon, and night, on the head of it all."

"An' her weenooch?" continued Cahill.

"As fine a lump of a boy as ever you—" began the vain father. His brother-in-law interrupted him.

"Oh! well,—sure I know, Peery; Nelly's gorsoon 'll want no praises you can give him. But that's not the businees, now. I cum here, a good stretch o' road, to speake o' something else to you and the boys forsent me, only I'm hungry, not to say drouthy, an' 'ud ax a bit an' a sup afore I make my noration. So you'll just step out, a vich, and beg a mouthful for me from Nelly, and tell her I'll see her, may be, the night, afore I take to my thravels again."

"I'll run out," volunteered one of the two men whom we have mentioned as glancing at Cahill in a questionable way—"I'll run out, Peery, an' you can be stoppin' wid your brother-in-law."

"No," said Cahill, fixing upon him an expressive look—"no, neighbour (we're all neighbours after a manner, tho' I won't take id on me to say I ever saw much of you afore); but ne, neither Peery nor you need go now. Con, my boy," turning hastily to the ex-chief of the assembly, "you and I are ould friends, an' you'll

Shank it no great trouble to run and axe a moseel,
& to ate for a hungry and a tired man."

"Your aither just sayin' it, Ned a-wish," responded Con, and he rose and strode towards the badly-secured and crazy door of the barn.

"I'll let you out my own self," continued Cahill. "There!" holding the door only a little way apart, while he again glanced keenly around him, "and now God speed you!" he shut the door, and secured it as he had found it; "and you and I, Peery, can just step, the closest of any, to the door; for who knows who might be on the scent of one of us abroad. There's great temptation, boys," turning to the legislators, as he drew a pistol from his breast—"great temptation, even among neighbours, sometimes, in the reward offered for the head of a poor outlaw."

Short answers, yet such as sympathised with Cahill's well-known position, or seemed to do so, came from the greater number of his hearers after he had spoken; but Peery O'Dea was greatly moved—his friends heard him groan as he turned away his face.

"It's a long time since you cum this road afo're, Ned," remarked Micky, afore-named, "tho' we hard tell of you shewin' yourself, here and there, in other places."

"Aye, Micky, the life I'm forced to keep isn't the pleasantest; here an' there, as you say, good weather and bad; sleepin' little, and never two nights together on the same road, an' never under a Christian roof, but out in the fields at the snug side of a stack, or in a wood, or in a plantation, or near the fox's hole, or down by the river near the otter's bed; and all for fear of what I said a moment ago. The neighbours are very good to me—I'll never deny id; and, as yet, I have no rason to be in dread or doubt of any one; but the reward in the proclamation is a heavy one—that's all I have to say."

He started slightly, Peery sharing his emotion, as a woman's voice came to the door on the outside, high in anxiety, if not lamentation. Cahill, after listening a moment, hastily undid a second time the fastenings of the door, using, however, some caution still, and after saying in a whisper to Peery, "Look about you," opened his arms to embrace his only sister, whom he had not for a long time seen, and who was his nearest surviving relation.

Their meeting evinced deep and true affection on both sides. The young woman had an interesting, if not handsome face, and her person just began to indicate the matroaly change which her characters and duties of wife and mother were working in her mind. She wept abundantly, while her arms surrounded his neck, and her face lay hidden on his bosom; but for some minutes her attempts to speak could not get beyond, "Oh! Ned—oh! poor Ned." Nor was the rough man she clung to unmoved.

At length they began to talk a little more freely, and calling to mind the claim which her brother had forwarded by Con upon her hospitality, Mary O'Dea caused the outlaw to sit down near the door with his back to the wall, upon her ample cloak folded into a temporary cushion; and confronting him, sitting also "on her hunkers," she gave him to eat of the plain fare she was able to snatch up at home, and to drink, too, out of a bottle of "potheen," diluted with water. During her attentions, and his industry in consequence of

them, Mary looked every other instant at her brother's features, or scanned his person, or perhaps the state of his attire, while tears still flowed down her cheeks, and plaintive mutterings escaped her. Poor Mary, poor as she was, deserves to be called a good specimen of the only really-beautiful existenee under Heaven's sun, a true-hearted and gentle-hearted woman. She possessed, too, as may appear, what (thank Providence) often mixes up with female excellencies in the softest shape, a strong, prompt mind, and a sacred sense of right and wrong.

"An' won't you stop wid us the night, Ned, agrav?" she asked, towards the conclusion of his hasty meal.

"You oughn't to say to me, won't you, Ned, but can you, Mary, ma chree," he answered, turning his head to the door to note if Peery continued to do his duty at it with the pistol he had slipped into his hand, "that's what you ought to say to me, Mary. But little's the use in thinkin' of the thing the heart 'ud like best to do, when a body isn't able to do it."

"I'll do something to get you lave to do that, Ned, my dear, afore I'm many days ouider," resumed Mary, glancing at her husband, and, with a nod of her head, looking expressively at her brother, while she spoke in a low, cautious voice.

"Mary, Mary, asthore!" he said in the lowest whisper, although its cadence betokened sudden and deep emotion, "what are you for saying, girl? Get up, and come this way wid me."

"He took her by the arm, and led her into a corner of the barn where they were far removed from the peasants.

"What's this, at all?" he continued; "tell me in one word, Mary?"

"I know all about it, at last, Ned, and I'll do my best to free you from the outlawry," she replied.

"Duoul!" he cried, impatiently; "the woman has taken lave of her seven senses!—and all about what?—and what would you dhrame o' doing?—and who tould you, Mary, if you do know all?"

"Himself, Ned."

"Peery—his own self?" he demanded.

"No other cratur; who could? Poor fellow! he couldn't long keep it from me; the heart in his body is too straighth, and it loves and likes us both too well to let him lie down quietly, and you—"

"Whisht, Mary—for your life, whisht!" He cast his suspicious eyes all around him. "Musha, but he's a born fool of his mother to open his lips to you a word about it. An' tell me, Mary, what are you goin' to do? what can you thry that wouldn't be against your own husband—the father of your weenoch?" he continued, passionately—"and daare you, Mary—daare you attempt any thing so unnatural as that? Mary, my curse be upon your head—and I will pray to our father and our mother to curse you out of their graves, if you let only the thought of it come into your mind."

He several times strove to speak: he seemed resolved to afford her no opportunity.

"Give over thinking of it, I warn you," he went on—"and now good bye, and God bless you, if you deserve his blessing. Good bye, Mary; I'll see you again as soon as I can."

He hastily turned from her, and standing with his back to the door, continued speaking the peasants without an instant's pause, "I'm goin' my road, boys, and as my time is short, I must say

what I have to say to ye at a hop-and-a-jump; so here it is. The Lord Lieutenant will be down among ye the morrow morning. He's to stop vid a good frind of yours, I hear, and that's like as if he wasn't far off from being a good frind himself. I don't want to advise ye to be good boys forntain his eyes; sure you'll thrate him well of your own accord, because ye all know he manes well to us (the first of his kind that ever said so, at laste), and more beoken because he goes about the poor countrry like a man who has thrust in its poor people; ridin' his horse, sometimes, almost alone along by-roads and bosheens, as simple, aye, and a great deal simpler than some o' the little squires nigh hand to us. Well, if it's a thing that Captain Lighton axes the Lord Lieutenant to ax ye to cut his harvest, it would only be a good turn, afther all, not to refuse. It may serve yourselves; and may be it might serve me, too, in an endayour I'm goin' to make to get leave to come home from my rambles, and take to 'attin' an honest mouthful again; and so there's what I'm come a' beggin' to ye for. And now the good night to ye, boys, or the top o' the mornin'; for that matter the day's breakin' already. God speed ye:

"Peery O'Dea," he added, whispering to his brother-in-law, "help me to open this ould door, quick, quick! and out vid you now like a hurler astore me! and let us run over a field or two together. I want to speake to you, and keep you free of harm! Come man, hurry!" He seized Peery's arm, and almost forced him through the doorway; and when Mary and some of the peasants went out to look after them, the brothers-in-law were not to be seen. Mary pendered a moment, shook her head, and then bent her steps homewards, little changed in the resolution she had taken to try and restore her brother to society:

"What fool's talk has passed between you and Mary; Peery O'Dea?" asked Cahill, when they had gained their place of concealment, the ruins of an old castle, which overhung the main road to their village.

"Ned," answered Peery, "you know I've told her all; don't fly in a passion wid me; I saw ye dis-coorsin' together in the barn, and it was asy to guess what Mary was saying to you."

"An' that's the way you keep your promise wid me?" questioned Ned.

"I couldn't help it, Ned Cahill, asthore. It was lyin' like a heavy stone on my heart. Sure enough, we both thought it would be for the best; I to hould my tongue an' thry to work for her and the weenoech, while ye were only forced to hide yourself for a sturt. But I'll tell you what it is, Ned; the mornin' I heard of them takin' you, I set off for the jail dour, to give myself up to them in your stead, as it well became me to do; an' nothin' but the news I learned on the road o' your breakin' jail, an' givin' 'em leg bail, the thing that put the ouldsway on you, asthore all, poor boy, nothin' but that sent me home agin. Aye, an' I have more to say to you, Ned Cahill; the first moment I hear of your falling into their clutches a second time, I'll be on the road to the jail dour a second time too; for I can't eat by day, nor sleep by night, thinkin' o' you. An' after all we can say about Mary and the child, my heart tells me I'm not doing a thing that a man ought to do."

"Bother an' botheration, Peery; do you mean to tell me, even if it did happen that I was looked up agin, that it would be the part of a man to start him-

self off, of his own accord, from wife an' weenoech; to say nothin' o' the poor ould father o' you sittin' at home by the fire; an' let them send you for life across the wide seys, if they didn't take the life from you aforehand? I tell you, man, you have your duties laid out for you on this yearth; as for me, no one is dependin' on me, and no one 'ud miss me barrin' yourself an' Mary; an' even ye only for the sorrow, an' nothing at all for the loss; an' I am not a boy given to marryin', I don't think the notion of id'll ever come into my head agin; for, in troth, Peery, from the day I helped to carry poor Cauth Farrel to the berrin-ground, afther the lang sickness that made her a light load to carry any where afore it ended her days"—Cahill's voice changed, and his eyes fell—"from that day to this, Peery, though I was a younger boy then, I never saw the colleen I'd care to be thinkin' of; no, nor wanted to see her neither. But we're talkin' a power o' raumsauish here, in this old place. Tell me, Peery, an' don't tell me any thing but the truth, how much of the real business did you blab out to Mary?"

"I didn't hide a single bit of the real business, Ned. I tould her that it was myself (an' you not wid us nor in the secret) that went up to Lighton's house that night, for the arms, along wid the other boys; an' tould her ye only follid us to get me home out o' danger, when, by bad luck, you found out what I was goin' to do; and that when the Peelers pursued us, asthore we got the guns and pistols, and were hard and close on my thrack, you ran up to me, Ned, and forced my gun from me, an' made me turn off home by a cross-cut; ooh, Ned! if it could come into my mind that night, what you were goin' to do!"

"Phu, Peery, I never meant they should ketch either of us, when I took your gun, an' if you were bid by me to use your legs sooner, they never would have to tell that they came up wid me; 'twas our argufuin' the thing that spiled all. Well, no matter now. Just listen to me over agin. What's Mary goin' to do, to thry an' get me free o' the outlawry; can you tell me that, Peery?" Peery solemnly protested that he could not. He had never heard his wife mention the subject. Cahill looked grave, and after a pause, kindling into a rage, said, "By the sky over us! if my sister, my father's and my mother's daughter, ever attempts the like of it, I could kill her with my own hand!"

Peery asked what he meant; and it was obvious, from his perfectly unconscious manner, that he did not share with his brother-in-law a single doubt of Mary. Cahill evaded answering him.

"You must stop the day by my side, Peery—that's all; or as much of the day, at laste, as 'll be wanting to do what I mane to doe in. An', first of all, let us hide here till the Lord Lieutenant passes by to Mr. Lowe's big house; I'd like to see him, that I may know him agin; an' he'll soon come now, for Mr. Lowe expects him to the great break'ast."

Accordingly both remained in the old ruins some hours, peering out upon the road through narrow window-slits in its walls. And Ned Cahill seemed to have gained true information as to the movements of Vice-Royalty. After some time, distant shouts reached them; they watched the top line of the hilly road; the uproar came nearer; clouds of dust arose in view, and dimly seen through it, down streamed and trundled the crowds of peasantry, who were drawing his Excellency, with silken ropes, in his open carriage, and the huge crowds who, jumping and capering, were before them, beside them, and behind them, and Mr. Lowe, and others, guidin-

men of the place, on horseback, in front; "an' not a sojer nor a Peeler to be seen!"—as the ecstatic mob declared, and truly declared, the ecstatic mob, who, not two years before, had been enjoying the Insurrection Act, and who have not remained quite ecstatic ever since that blessed morning.

"I'm tould I'll know him in the carriage by his takin' off his hat and makin' all manner o' bows and fine manners to the people," soliloquised Cahill, looking close, as the frantic rout whirled onward the truly and meritorily popular Lord Lieutenant, often tumbling over each other, in the miserable zeal of each and all to "have one pull at the ropes."

"Well, an' there I've seen him, sure enough," resumed Cahill, "an' it'll be square if I don't know him agin', after he ates his break'ast—much good may it do him, every bit an' sup of id!"

At Mr. Lowe's hall-door the people permitted his Excellency to stop. Their parish priest there read him a little address, to which he replied kindly, in impromptu. Again we have to notice the correctness of Ned Cahill's private sources of information. Captain Lighton, who, with other gentlemen, had ridden out that morning to meet the great man, handed a note into the carriage. The Lord Lieutenant, interrupting a few words of conversation with the parish priest, immediately glanced once at it, and then, saying something in a low voice, gave it to his late reverend panegyrist, who having perused it in his turn, thus addressed the assembled thousands—

"My good people—down to this morning ye have refused, even against my request, to cut Captain Lighton's corn; here is his Excellency, the Lord Lieutenant General, and Governor General of Ireland, and your friend, if you will let him, by deserving his friendship—and through my mouth his Excellency is pleased to ask ye, will you, or will you not, save the blessed harvest that Divine Providence—"

"We will, please his majesty and your riverince," interrupted a voice very like that of "Con;" "we will, out o' glory to him for axin' us—an' for another little rason, because poor Ned Cahill, that we're all sorry for, an' love an' like, is after bidding us do the same thing aforhand."

"Ned Cahill! the poor outlaw!" resumed the good priest, forgetting a little chagrin he had felt, on the head of being cheated out of a very pretty peroration, by Con's interruption; and he and the Lord Lieutenant began to discourse anew, in seeming earnestness.

Ned Cahill and Peery O'Dea soon had proof, from a changed hiding-place, that the people respected Con's pledge as their spokesman; shouting and capering, and brandishing their sickles, hundreds of them rushed into the captain's fields, and simultaneously attacked all the ripe corn they could find.

And still the outlaw showed a knowledge of how more important people were to act upon that—to him—memorable day. Having again spirited Peery along with him to a convenient place of ambush, he watched, earnestly, the expected approach of the Lord Lieutenant, along a by-road leading, zigzag, from Mr. Lowe's house. Peery knew his purpose by this time, and awaited its issue with his own mental reservations of what he would do, should evil come of Ned's bold thought.

"Whist, Peery!" cried Cahill, catching his arm, as he glanced over the hedge of the road, with a sparkling eye, and suddenly flaring cheeks:—"here he is, sooner than I or others had a notion of!—and ridin' quite alone, too, by the Powers!—not an edge-

a-gong, nor Misster Lowe, himself, wid him! well, an' that's square! bud I s'pose they're behind the turn o' the road; or at any rate, it's all the better for me—so here goes, in the name o' God and good luck!"—and springing upon the road, and falling instantly upon his knees, straight before the object of his soul's solicitude and reverence, he continued—"Oh, your Excellency! oh, my Lord Lieutenant! oh, plaise your Majesty, hear one word from a poor, heart-sore man!"

"Whoa—what, what friend?" stuttered the person he addressed, endeavouring to rein in and quiet his horse, who had been amazingly startled at the sudden vision of Cahill; and indeed, the horse's master did not speak or look like a man of perfect presence of mind.

"My life, my life!" resumed Cahill; "wait, your honour, my Lord Lieutenant, an' I'll hold him for you;"—and he jumped up and grasped the horse's reins—"an' now—"

"Let go, fellow! let go,"—screamed the rider, in increased terror, for, from Cahill's brogue and impassioned pronunciation, he had mistaken the possessive pronoun which the suppliant had placed before the word "life."

"Och, an' won't I, your majesty, won't I, when you only hear me speake one word!—sure I'm no one else in the world, bud poor Cahill the outlaw, that your majesty—"

"Outlaw!" repeated the other—"savage villain! do you mean to murder me?"

"Murder you, my Lord Lieutenant!" repeated poor Cahill, in turn, letting go the reins, and starting back, aghast, with clasped hands—"By the blessed stars in the sky! I love an' like you so well, that I wouldn't harm a hair o' your horse's mane, let alone one o' your own head, for the round world stufed full of gold!"

"And why do you carry that pistol, then?" still stammered the poor Double, now a little soothed, however, by the honied flattery of Cahill, and the repetitions of the splendid titles addressed to him.

"This? the bit of a pistol, my lord?" Cahill drew it from his breast, where its butt had not been well hidden; "och, an' is id me you fear, on the head o' this!—lookee here, plaise your majesty."

He discharged the weapon in the air, close by the horse's ears, however; the animal pranced and reared in a frenzy of terror, and his rider, still sharing his feelings, could scarce keep his saddle.

"An' see here agin," continued Cahill, hurling the pistol from him, an action lost to the confounded and dancing eyes of the Double; "and now, at laste, your majesty 'll please to ~~fear~~ me!" he renewed his grasp on the horse's bridle, really only meaning well; "you put the outlawry on an innocent poor man, my Lord Lieutenant! one that never riz a hand, for bad, in the country!—oh, take it off o' me! take it off o' me! Let me go home from the hills and the woods again, to sleep undher a christhen roof, and to meet my fellow-creatures widout bein' afraid o' them, an' to put my hand to the spade or the plough, agin, that I may arn the honest bit, and the honest sup, an' that I may go to the house o' God, an' kneel down there, and put up my prayers for you an' yours, to the last day I draw the breath o' life!—ochown, take it off o' me, an may you reign long in glory, and die happy!—It's an innocent boy that axes you, my Lord the Lieutenant—it's an in-

nocent poor boy!—Say the word out o' your mouth, say the word, an' do a good action! say the word, an'—”

“ Well, well, man,” interrupted the Double, his fears now divided between the uncertainty whether he had to do with a wild-Irish assassin, or a wild-Irish madman; “ d— don’t you pull me about so, and we shall see: let go the bridle and I will say the word—there—stand aside, now, and you may regard yourself as a free man.”

“ Hurrah! ” screamed Cahill, jumping up a good height from the ground, as he smote his breast in utter joy; “ Peery O’Dea, inside the fence there, do you hear that? ”

“ Hurrah! an’ it’s I that do! ” answered Peery, with another shout, discovering himself.

“ It’s off o’ me—it’s off o’ me! ” continued Cahill, hugging his brother-in-law; “ isn’t id, your honour in glory—isn’t id? ”

“ It is, it is—to be sure it is—have I not said so? I revoke every thing—only won’t you and the other man move away from my horse’s head? So—good day to you both—all’s right—good day—” and seeing the road at last clear before him, the speaker gave spur and rein to his horse, and was out of sight in a moment—ay, and out of Ireland, in some hours after, from the nearest seaport, sured, in a degree, of performing his absurd and miserable impostures in it.

“ There you go, an’ may honour an’ glory be in your road, afore you! ” Cahill continued to shout.

“ There you go, an’ may you never know what it is to have a heart as heavy as the hearts you’re after makin’ happy, this day! ” added Peery.

“ Stand! ” cried voices at their backs; “ one of you is Cahill, the outlaw. ” They turned, and saw half a dozen police, who, with presented carbines, immediately surrounded them.

“ Bother, boys, wid your stand! ” answered Ned; “ I’m Cahill, sure enough, but no outlaw, this blessed day, thank God, an’ his honour the Lord Lieutenant! Hurrah! ” he jumped again.

“ Come, come—your arms, ” said the serjeant of the party.

“ Arms? sorrow a one I have, barria’ the two God gave me;—a little while ago, to tell thruth, I had a sort o’ an ould pistol wid me—but I sint the bullet of id up into the air, an’ itself after the bullet, to the divile, entirely—an’ it’s my word I give you, master Peelers, honies, that, from this day out—”

“ Search him, ” interrupted the serjeant.

“ Here, then—sarch—sarch, sarch—oh, wid all my heart. I tell you, boys, it’s only givin’ yourselves throuble for nothin’! ”

“ Fall in with the men, then, and march for jail, ” resumed the serjeant, when the useless search was ended.

“ Jail! me march for jail? ye’re mad to speake of id. It’s more than your lives are worth to use the words. Take great care what ye’re for doin’! ”

“ Come, fall in:—where are the handcuffs? ”

“ Handcuffs? ” as he heard them jingling; “ have a’ care o’ your behaviour to me, I tell you once agin! ” ejaculated Cahill, while he vainly resisted the strength used to manacle his hands. “ His own self took the ban off o’ me, master Peelers—his own self, my Lord the Lieutenant, only a minute ago, an’ on this very blessed spot! ay, ye may laugh at me; bud I say he did! and here’s Peery O’Dea that’s ready to say the

same thing, for he hard an’ seen him: didn’t you, Peery, didn’t you? ”

Peery proved, indeed, a ready witness; but still the police sneered, until, after glancing down the road, in the direction of Mr. Lowe’s house, the serjeant said, “ Well, Cahill, now’s the time to get grace from us, if your words are true, ” the man’s tone was still deriding; “ here comes his Excellency. ”

“ Which way? ” demanded Cahill, glancing up and down the road, in great astonishment. “ Eh? the gentleman ridin’ up to us wid Mr. Lowe an’ the officers? stop—wait—stop—eh? by the powers o’ man, an’ it is sure enough, however the divile—or by the Lord’s will—he got there. Peery! Peery, avich! ”

“ Shove aside, and clear the road, ” said the serjeant. The police and their prisoners accordingly stood at the fence, the men presenting arms. The Lord Lieutenant stopt before them, and was about to ask what was the matter, when Cahill broke forward, and falling almost prostrate, with his manacled hands, prayed his Excellency to look on him, and remember him well, and say whether or no he had not, a few moments before, pardoned him his offences; and at the same time he again shouted out for Peery O’Dea to support his assertion.

“ The man must be mad, ” said the Lord Lieutenant to Mr. Lowe: “ both of them must be so; I have never seen either of them in my life before: and yet how apparently sincere is their earnestness—one of them weeps. ”

At the sound of his Excellency’s voice, Cahill started up, staring in misgiving and dismay on the face of the speaker; and again he called, in a whisper, to “ Peery! Peery, avich! ” as if for counsel.

“ No, Ned, asthore, ” replied Peery, after making his own observations, “ tisn’t himself is afore us—or—it is himself, I mane—or else there’s two o’ them—or, it was the ould divile that came the road, first of all, to make you go thro’ wid the foolish thought o’ your mind, an’ get you taken agin! ”

While the Lord-Lieutenant still spoke in an under-tone to Mr. Lowe, the serjeant of the police advanced to recapture Cahill. Peery O’Dea now sprang forward and continued, in a loud, bawling voice—“ But since they have you the second turn, Ned, it’s time for me to do what I said. Plaise your lordship, Ned Cahill, my wife’s brother, tho’ he broke jail, is as innocent as my own weenoch o’ what sent him there! I am the man—I, Peery O’Dea,—that headed the boys up to the house, for the arms that night; an’ Ned wasn’t wid us at all, only met me on the road, after we got what we went for—an’ forced my gun for me, an’ stood to be saized by the Peelers! an’ this is the holy thruth, an’ I’ll get your honor plenty o’ witnesses to say so: an’ now, sure your majesty’ll just tell them to let him go, and take me in his place, an’—”

“ Don’t put thrust in a word the fool of a boy is sayin’, glory to your lordship, ” interrupted Cahill; “ the head of him is cracked, because I’m poor Mary’s brother, an’ he’s often not in his right mind; twas in my hands the gun was found—an’ twas I that broke jail—and, by coorse, it’s I that ought to go to jail, over agin; an’ so, mister serjeant—now, the Lord save us! an’ what’s this? ”

“ Mary O’Dea held him in her arms, sobbing and

weeping aloud. "To jail you'll never go, brother Ned, machees!" she cried, "never, never, praises to the good God, an' our good Lord Lieutenant!" "Avich, you poor cratur; an' did that desaitful divile come across you, too, an' make you all manner o' promises?" asked Cahill, returning her embraces. "Your honour, my lord!" continued Mary, "spake the word you promised me!"

Addressing Mr. Lowe, his Excellency, touched and affected, turned his horse's head—"Pray, sir, explain to the poor people." "Cahill," said Mr. Lowe, "your sister has saved you; at least confirmed the Lord Lieutenant's merciful disposition towards you, previously formed out of other circumstances. She contrived to meet his Excellency, before my house this morning, and on condition that a considerable dépôt of concealed arms—discovered by her, she has not said how," (Cahill glanced from Mary to Peery)—"should be delivered up, obtained your pardon. The tranquillity of the country for the last year, a word in your favour from your priest and others, and indeed from myself, and a wish to show the degraded people that they will be treated mercifully,

whenever they, themselves, afford the opportunity—all this helped your sister's prayers. Thank his Excellency. You are a free man."

That Cahill did as he was bid it would be idle to enforce; neither is it necessary to describe the joy of the re-united family. But, indeed, kind readers—contradictory as the thing may sound—men made of mortal materials similar to those which we believe you like in the brothers-in-law, Ned and Peery, often plunder arms in some Irish counties—nay, (and alas! for the admission) use them fearfully, too. Let us hope and pray, however, that such an Irish Lord Lieutenant as we here have sketched for you, acting under the wise instructions which shape his own excellent feelings and inclinations, may soon gain possession of all the hidden dépôts of distraction accumulated by the wretched people.

As for his Double—

"Peery, avich," said Cahill, after they and Mary had been left alone on the road, "let us run hard straight ahead, an' thry an' lay hound o' that brute beast o' a pretender!"

END OF THE IRISH LORD LIEUTENANT AND HIS DOUBLE.

John Cunningham, Printer, Crown-court, Fleet-street, London.

THE THREE KEARNEYS.

A TALE OF THE DOMINIE.

BY

ANDREW PICKE N.

“How happy might the wise and virtuous live
Wer’t not for wicked hearts that prowl the earth,
To turn its bliss to misery.”

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THE THREE KEARNEYS.

A TALE OF THE DOMINIE.*

CHAPTER I.

*"How happy might the wise and virtuous live
Wer't not for wicked hearts that prowl the earth,
To turn its bliss to misery."* *Scraps.*

IT was a sad glib that, that I once got by an affair that occurred in the Irish country while I took up my abode there, and it put my nerves more out of the way than I can well describe now, as I am only recollecting the matter as a bye-past fact. But such a sight as a father and two sons, an old grey-headed man, and I may say his whole family, going all together, as I saw them go past my door, and in my view, and that of thousands, is such as I hope never to see the like of again; although I do not think that the world is growing better in these last days, half so fast as I could wish it should. Indeed, I am of opinion that the world must still be a bad world, for all the pains that have been taken with it, else such things could never have happened as I am now musing over, and which makes my heart ache to think of. If any one wishes to know what the affair was, let them sit down with me, and I will tell them, as well I can, the whole story.

It was while I was living within the interior precincts of the flaunting city of Dublin, in the Irish kingdom, that I first began seriously to make my observations on things in general; so wandering to and fro to observe the city, as much as possible, at a distance, rather than in its inner embraces, my walks lay often in those southern environs of the place, that spread off so pleasantly towards the green sloping hills, joining the King's county, which the Irish, in their usual boastful phraseology, choose to dignify by the name of the Dublin mountains. On that side of the city, and on a pleasant elevation, is situated the healthy village of Harold's Cross, and beyond the village towards the said mountains, appear the picturesque policies of Robert Shawfield, Esq., of the Warren, some time a representative in parliament for the Irish metropolis.

Now there lived by the road side, beyond Harold's Cross, and near to the fine domain of the Warren, an elderly man and woman, of the name of Kearney, who had two strapping sons living at home with them. These young men bore, however, rather a ne'er-do-well character, and in fact the whole of the Kearneys were known extensively round, as a suspicious and troublesome sort of people. Yet were they, after all, rather well liked, and applauded, by their own sort of rabbling clan jamfrey of the neighbourhood, more, for aught I know, because they neither feared God nor regarded man, than for any good or commendable qualities. The old woman (her name was Judith, or rather Judy, as the people called her) was well named after that strong-stomached amazon who cut off the head of the man with whom she went to consort herself, as we read of in the Apocrypha; for she was known all round to be a perfect-born devil, and like many other of the parents of the Irish youth, able to bring up her sons in the practice of all manner of malice and wickedness. We cannot say

* "The machinery of 'The Dominie's Legacy' is soon described—a benevolent and well-informed Scottish village schoolmaster becomes independent, by the means of a property left him by one of his pupils, and is thereby enabled to gratify a favourite propensity to ramble on foot throughout the country, a habit in which he had previously indulged as much as possible during the recesses of his school avocations. Tales, for the most part connected with the incident and character he is supposed to encounter in these peregrinations, he bequeathed to a friend for publication, and hence the title of the work," &c.—*Westminster Review*, vol. xiii.

that the old man was quite so bad as his amiable helpmate (for without doubt, she, as her neighbours would say, was "a sweet nut"), and it was even affirmed that he had occasionally in his life manifested sundry symptoms of a reckless sort of Irish generosity. Besides, the father of this hopeful family had no imagination to invent a wicked plot, yet still he was of a sour and dogged turn, had within him a deep spirit of suspicion and of vengeance, and if he deserved not the praise of having the head to conceive, it could not be denied that he had the hand to execute, the darkest scheme of guilt and cruelty.

In adverting to the subject of the possibility of ma, particularly in Ireland, it hath always appeared to me an exceedingly wise and reasonable proposal, that in order to purify the character of the Irish youth of the lower orders, we should begin by shooting all the parents with a cannon; at least this was the plan of a most reasonable and humane person, who lived about the times of the celebrated Irish Dean, and who had more wisdom than I think it at all convenient to pretend to. But not being versed in metaphysics so as to entitle me to insist upon the execution of this sensible project, the story leads me simply to observe, that at least the young Kearneys of whom we are now speaking, could not be expected to imbibe much of the spirit of goddness and honesty, from the walk and conversation of such parents.

Accordingly "the boys" were persons of what philosophers would call "a mixed character," that is to say, they had the usual semi-barbarous virtues of the Irish mountaineer, generous, hospitable, and warm towards those whom they chose for the moment to delight in, but savage and selfish when the fit was over. Still, however, they were rather handsome boys, had the wild and roving eye of the southern Hibernian, with the showy, spluttering, and slobbering manner of the ordinary native. A full share of the bad dispositions of mankind they certainly had inherited, to qualify them for villains; yet still it must have been by their amiable parents alone that these youths were fully instructed in the mystery of iniquity.

The Kearneys had a cow, which lived abroad about the neighbourhood, and some half dozen pigs, who lived at home with the family. How the pigs got their living, or indeed the Kearneys themselves, was by no means clearly made out by the most sagacious of the people in the cabins around. But as for the cow, it was no secret that, although as honest and discreet-looking a brute as need be, she was universally allowed to be a common interloper and a thief, getting her living wherever she could, or rather wherever she was driven, and bringing disgrace and a blush upon all the well-disposed cows, from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains. This cow was a constant object of eyesore and dispute throughout the neighbourhood, and in particular by the servants and retainers of Mr Shawfield, of the Warren, for the grass which grew so rich upon the broad meadows of his estate she had always been peculiarly fond of; and to this predilection the four Kearneys never were known to have made the smallest objection. Mr Shawfield himself, who knew the character of the Kearneys well, issued several strong proclamations against them and their cow, but to these they were too audacious to pay any attention; and as for his own people, whose duty it was to have curbed or punished such doings, they stood too much in awe of the Kearneys themselves to take any active side against them.

At this time there lived in the neighbourhood, and on the further side of the warren demesne, a widow woman, who, together with her two daughters, then living at home with her, were held in much favour by the squire, the father of the girls having been long a faithful domestic of the family, and the widow and children being uniformly industrious and deserving. This woman excited some envy in the neighbourhood, not only from the desired favour shown to her by the squire, but from the way in which she chose to bring up her daughters, whom it was thought she was rearing with a cleanliness very much above their condition. But this neighbourly envy began insensibly to merge into admiration and respect, as the girls grew to womanhood: for though they all lived in much isolation, in their cottage near the foot of the Dublin mountains, they were so decidedly superior to all the young women around, that they tacitly came to be held up for a pattern, and one of them, the eldest, began to be quite distinguished and talked of for her beauty.

It was not for a long time known who was the favoured one of all those that now eagerly sought the company of Mattie Connor, and the secret was first discovered by the attentive Mr Shawfield himself, who, with the virtuous anxiety of a benevolent husband, kept a sharp

watch over the fate of a dependent of so interesting a character. He recognised by accident, but with perfect approval, the lover of Mattie, in the person of an active young fellow, the son of one of his most respected tenants; and he secretly resolved, if the youth continued to act as praiseworthy as he had begun, to make him an object of his favour and promotion. This he was the more disposed to do, as Owen Lambert, the young man, had, of his own accord, shown a firmness and a spirit in resisting the provoking freedoms of the Kearneys, such as no one but himself had ventured to attempt. The first thing, therefore, Mr Shawfield did, was to make Owen Lambert his game or park ranger, entrusting him with the charge of the whole of his policies, and directing his attention, particularly, to the wanton and insulting intrusions of the Kearneys and others, who made repeated depredations on his property.

This new situation, thus conferred upon Lambert, rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the whole of the Kearneys, who saw, in his spirit and indefatigable activity, an obstacle and a check, of no trifling power, to their hindrance in their various impudent proceedings. It happened also, about this time, that the eldest of the two younger Kearneys (his name was Pat) having thought fit, as was seldom the case, to accept of a few days' labour on a farm beyond the Warren, and near to the dear cottage of the widow, set his eyes, for the first time, to take particular notice of her, upon the handsome and happy Mattie Connor, and getting at once into a natural sort of savage love, boldly and ardently tried for Mattie's acquaintance.

The reception that Pat Kearney's audacious addresses received from so gentle a spirit as Mattie need not be described, particularly as both sisters had been well warned against such company by their mother, the quiet and careful widow of the cottage. The spirit of Kearney was of course too radically bad, and his ignorance too much approaching to ruffian barbarism, to enable him to see or account for, with anything like fairness, the cause and the reasonableness of his decided repulse. So he brooded over his mortification with a sour and grudgeful gloom; and being, like most bad youths, the pet of his mother, to that amiable lady he soon imparted the cause of his sullen looks and his bitter chagrin.

The peculiar curse of conscious wickedness was no new thing to the mother of the Kearneys, that is, the continual dread of being avoided by the good, and the abiding sense that they deserve to be avoided. Amid, therefore, her envious wrath at the gentle and inoffensive widow of the cottage, the beldame had the sagacity to conclude that some one must be favoured with the love of Mattie Connor, and a thought having crossed the suspicious brooding of the moment, a strong curiosity took fast hold of her, to know if the person could possibly be the squire's active and daring confidant, Owen Lambert. Distraining to make inquiries of the neighbours, most of whom avoided much familiarity with her or with her dreaded family, she, with the indefinite purpose and dogged perseverance of a malevolent spirit, went night after night, for several trials, to ascertain of a surety, for her inward satisfaction, whether Owen Lambert actually was the youth who, as she had learned, was frequently seen, under the eelid of night, to steal from the lone cottage where Mattie and her mother dwelt.

It so happened, that for several nights at this time, Owen Lambert's duty had prevented him from seeing his Mattie, but on the fourth or fifth he appeared to gladden all the inmates of the cottage, and to carry to his sweetheart the pleasing news of the squire's perfect approbation of their union, and of his having given orders for the preparation of a comfortable cottage for their reception, which stood near the centre of the policies of the warren, and which was expected to be ready for them in less than a fortnight. After partaking of some refreshment with the kind inmates of the cottage, Lambert took his leave, intending to proceed towards home, but Mattie slipped out to be his convey through the field towards the lane, from the natural wish to enjoy a little talk by themselves, and the parting embrace of him who was so soon to be her own for ever.

As they crossed the field which led towards the road, their whisper, so interesting to both, was somewhat interrupted by their accidentally observing a shapeless figure, moving, or rather stealing along, by the fence beside them. There was scarcely any moon, the figure was in the shadow just by the hedge, and the place being lonesome, and no thoroughfare near, so unexpected an apparition filled both the youth and his betrothed with some apprehension. A

they drew near to the stile that parted them from the road, Lambert stood still, determined to wait until the figure should come up, and to address to it the usual challenge of civility.

"God save you, friend!" was his natural address, as the woman came up, after the manner of the common people in the country parts of Ireland.

"God save you kindly!" was the hypocritical response of the mother of the Kearneys, and when she came up, and the dull moonbeam discovered the features of the well-known and detested old woman, a shuddering feeling came involuntarily over both of the lovers, from an apprehension that there was something which boded no good to either, in this her unexpected presence and observation.

"It is far from Harold's Cross for you to be at this hour, Mrs Kearney," said Lambert, civilly, "but may-be ye have lost your way as ye crossed from the mountains. It's a darkish night sure, for all the pretension of a moon."

"Mind the moulahan at your side, and never mind me, Mr Lambert," said the old woman, saucily, as she stepped over the stile; "and there's moon enough yet to light me to Harold's Cross if I want to go, but sure ye's both can see to kiss by the moon's glimmer that shows at night where the bog is blackest, although ye's, may-be, may have less light than will serve you to keep the four corners of the Warren free from cute cattle, that ken the differ between the squire's grass and the cotter's cabbage." Thus saying, the old woman went muttering away, and before the lovers could recover their momentary surprise, she was lost in the dark winding of the narrow lane.

"There is something that I do not like forbodes me about that wicked old woman," said Mattie Connor, laying her hand with alarm on her breast. "I wish no sad thing be yet to happen to us, Owen," she added, looking anxiously in the young man's countenance.

"Pooh, never fear, my jewel, Mattie," said Lambert gaily, and soon, by further expostulation, he succeeded in quelling the fears of his anxious lass. Thus, with their usual tenderness, they parted for the night, forgetting, in pleasanter thoughts, this ill-boding encounter.

On the same night three fine sheep were stolen from the flock in the Warren Park, and when the old woman arrived at home she found her sons washing carefully the blood from off their hands; the supper that already fried on the cottage fire was seasoned with the full tale of her discovery, and sundry taunts and hints, and half-intimated threatenings, addressed to her sons, that made the eyes of the three men flash with a fiendish expression, sadly predicted what was afterwards to be consummated.

CHAPTER II.

SEVERAL weeks after this, however, passed quietly away, and now Owen Lambert and Mattie Connor were married and happy, and living in the pleasant honeymoon of their union in the pretty cottage that had been prepared for them in the middle of the Warren policy. The whole neighbourhood seemed disposed to rejoice in their union, from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains, excepting, indeed, the Kearney family, whose envy and malice exceeded all bounds, and only wanted an occasion to break out into some deed which should glut and gratify the infernal spirit to which these wretched people had now entirely given way. This feeling of demoniac hate was aggravated, if possible, by the very forbearance, clemency, and advocacy in their favour with the squire, of the sensible and considerate grieve of the warren; and by their being made sensible that he had fully traced the theft of the three sheep to them, and had partly concealed it, and partly taken the blame of their loss upon himself, on account of his temporary absence from the grounds at the time—he wishing, if possible, by fair means and faithful vigilance in future, to prevent, if possible, any further cause of difference between the Kearneys and his master.

But all this cautious and indulgent conduct only served to deepen the hatred of the infatuated family, whose malignant spirit seemed to brood day and night over the provoking good conduct, and still more provoking success of the attentive grieve. The praises which the people of the neighbourhood lavished on the young couple for their looks, as they now appeared in their well-saved clothes of a Sunday, walking arm in arm so lovingly past the Kearneys' very door, to and from the Protestant church in Harold's Cross, was like wormwood to the

envious spirit of the three men, and stung them to madness as it was weekly repeated in their ears. Yet with all their malice, the natural dread with which cowardly vice always regards open-fronted virtue and manly good conduct, together with the firm threatening of the squire, so awed the Kearneys, that they dared not drive their cow into the parks of the warren as they were used to do, and made them waver in their half-formed purposes of vengeful audacity. But the cow now being expelled from every field and enclosure round, began to be much in want of grass, and to give a stinted measure of the dairy produce, which made the old woman murmur and mutter at the vigilant grieve, and soon to taunt her hopeful "boys" for their cowardly meanness to think of paying for cow's grass so long as there was so much of it growing rich upon the meadows "of the warren beyant," which might give them all many a meal of good milk for nothing, if it was not for their own chicken-hearted pusillanimity, the devil save them.

It was not hard to advise the "boys," to any outrage which might give provocation to the favoured grieve, so, on the morning of the next day, the two in person openly drove their vexatious cow into one of the very best parks of the warren. By the order of the grieve, if obeyed to the letter, he might at once have pounded the cow, and left the Kearneys to seek their remedy; but having been warned to take care of proceeding to any extremity against such dangerous persons, by the foreboding anxiety of his anxious young wife, he only drove the cow from the park, and even went in person on the same evening to the Kearneys' cottage, to expostulate with them against persisting in proceedings so likely to bring trouble and ruin upon themselves. When he entered their cabin, he unfortunately found no one at home but the hardened old woman, and to his earnest and almost beseeching warning, of what would be the sure result to her husband and sons, if they desisted not from their insulting trespasses, she only replied with a taunting sneer, and a heap of reproaches upon "the garsoon," for his persevering zeal in the execution of his duty.

Two days more had not passed over, when the cow was again found grazing in the same park, and was forthwith driven to the pound, after the whole affair had been laid before the squire. Determined no longer to submit to these repeated outrages, Mr Shawfield resolved to follow out and punish this last offence with the utmost rigour, particularly as it had been accompanied by a wanton breaking of his fences, such as had never before been attempted, and of which his faithful grieve had himself managed to be the eye-witness. Besides, therefore, putting the Kearneys to the usual expenses of the pound, which they paid with dark and uncompunctionous reluctance, provoked by their saucy and threatening manner, the squire further resolved to make an example of this family, and accordingly summoned the father and eldest son to a court in Dublin, to answer to the charge of a wanton trespass, the grieve being of course the chief, yet reluctant witness against them.

The news of the approaching trial of the Kearneys, when it came cautiously to the ears of the young wife of the grieve, filled her with an involuntary and anxious apprehension. She feared something, she knew not what; she wished the trial was over, and yet she scarcely knew why; for Mr Shawfield had given her assurances of the utmost favour and protection to her deserving husband, and had himself called to see her, and to give her his word to that effect. Still, as the day drew near when Owen Lambert was to go into Dublin, she could not divest herself of her foreboding anxiety, for dreadful reports had come to her ears of the horrible threatening that the Kearneys had been heard to utter against the humane yet vigilant youth. The personal situation of the young wife now helped to increase her tendency to nervous anxiety, and though by day her mind was soothed by argument and assurance, by night her fancy was haunted with every sort of terrifying image. She had often heard, with a feminine shudder, of the dreadful atrocities of Irish revenge committed in the wild parts of her unfortunate country, and whenever she tried to sleep, as she lay at midnight, listening for sound or tread without her lonely cottage, dark horrors, burnings, and murders, haunted her disturbed slumbers; but when she was awoke by some startling shriek of her imaginary terrors, and found Owen sleeping placidly by her side, she would clasp him to her bosom, with the thankful fondness of a wife, and thus fall asleep, again uttering murmurs of gratitude to heaven for his safety.

CHAPTER III.

At length the day arrived, previous to the one appointed for the bearing of the charge against the Kearneys, and some reports having been current that this pestiferous family were likely from hence to be forced entirely from the neighbourhood, gave confidence and spirits to the anxious wife, so that the day wore over with unusual comfort. In the afternoon the young couple were visited at their cottage by widow Connor, Mattie's mother, who staid with them till after nightfall, and the evening was spent with affectionate and gay hilarity. At length the mother-in-law rose to depart, and Owen rose also, in order to accompany her, at least part of the way, across the fields towards her cottage. But when he went to the door and opened it, looked out upon the dark sky, and across the obscure fields as far as he could see, and heard the low wind sighing through the sweeping planting, and the murmur of the distant river which hummed beyond the Warren, a pulse of involuntary dread struck at his heart, and he felt this night a reluctance to entrust himself without, such as he never before remembered to have come over him. But he did not express anything to indicate this in the presence of his wife, although he went without and looked round, and came in again, and appeared thoughtful and restless, and did not move for some time after the widow had intimated her intention to leave the cottage.

His wife was somewhat struck with his manner, and at first made an objection to his going with her mother, which he, in the spirit of hospitable courage, would by no means listen to; so her former fears having by this time been much dispelled, she made little opposition, and with an affectionate look in her face as he parted from her, away he went to be convey to the widow, with many charges from Mattie, that if he observed nothing which might require his presence without he should speedily return, to enjoy his rest and her advice, before what was to take place on the following day.

Lambert had not gone far from the door across the fields, the young wife being left in the cottage alone, when the thought smote her, that she ought not to have allowed her Owen to leave his home at night, at least until the trial was over. An ominous dread now came over her concerning him, and she began to feel an anxiety for his safety, that became perfectly intolerable. All the usual reasonings in such circumstances, she called in to check the intensity of her uneasy apprehensions, as she waited with impatience in the empty dwelling, and listened eagerly, trying to hear his distant footsteps. An hour—two hours, passed entirely away, and still she listened, until she could audibly hear the hard beating of her own heart, but no other sound was there to indicate his coming, or to relieve the dreadful horror of her fevered imaginings. She went out from the cottage, dear with the lamp in her hand. It cast a feeble and limited glance towards the dark meadows, but all lay shrouded in silence and obscurity, and him whom she looked for came not. As it wore towards midnight without his making his appearance, the young woman sat like a statue in the midst of his terror, or paced about the cottage in incipient distraction. She next seized the little cloak that hung by the wall, and throwing it round her, rushed into the dark fields to seek for her husband.

She wandered some way over the wet grass, and still she could see no one; but sometimes, as she stopped to listen, she thought she could hear the voices of men in the dark distance, and clamours and struggling sounds seemed to come over her eager ear, and again she thought she could even distinguish faint shrieks and low groans, carried upon the tell-tale wings of the passing blast. But this reality or fancy was too much for her nerves to bear, and she stood for a time stock still in the meadow. The cold wind of midnight now blew chill in her face, and nameless terrors came with more than freezing power over her heart, until becoming alarmed lest she should faint beside the planting, she made a great effort to retrace her steps, and with much difficulty was barely able to reach her empty and desolate dwelling.

It is not for me to attempt to describe how the poor young woman got over this dreadful night. But hour after hour passed like ages away, and when daylight came without the return of her Owen, she lost the sense of her distress in the relief of overpowering insensi-

life. In this state was Mattie Lambert, found by a neighbour, who came to inquire, for her husband before his going to Dublin, to attend the much-talked-of trial of the Kearneys.

Mr Shawfield at this time was living in his house in Dublin, and being much interested in the present business, from the repeated appearances of the Kearneys, was early in the court on the morning of the trial, or rather of the simple exhibition of a charge to which they were bound over to appear, and took his seat on the bench near the magistrate for the hearing. The case was soon called, but though he had observed the Kearneys to be early in court, his faithful grieve had not yet made his appearance. Something unknown might have prevented the witness's early attendance, and the squire got the case put off till a late hour in the day, and now he became seriously uneasy, for still Owen Lambert appeared not. The magistrate was now ready for this last case, and, unable to delay the hearing, went somewhat into the charge in the case, — but on the principal witness being again repeatedly called in court, still the grieve appeared not.

The anxious squire looked among the crowd in vain, and an impudent sneer was manifest in the countenance of the three Kearneys, their bold and prettier, who stood behind, regarding with laughter the aldermen on the bench. While the court now consented as to the propriety of dismissing this case for want of evidence, the elder of the Kearneys, looking towards the bench, and smiling saucily as he turned towards the squire, uttered this strange and impudent speech: —

“ Robert Shawfield, Esq. M. P., — where is the fine witness that ye were to have brought to swear against me and my boys? If ye have him, why don't he come forward?”

The pain that Mr Shawfield felt at the impertinence of this speech was nought to the thought that struck him at the moment, as he gazed severely in the face of the taunting old man.

“ I request that these three men,” said he, “ may be instantly taken into custody, under the charge at least of stealing from off my property three sheep, which I shall prove by other witnesses besides him who was to have appeared this morning against them. Heaven grant that they may have no greater guilt than this last to account for, both to God and man!”

The words had scarcely been spoken, when a messenger arrived from the warren to inform the squire that the grieve, having left his cottage on the previous night, had never returned; and that search having been made for him everywhere, no traces of him were to be found; but that certain marks of a struggle had been observed on the side of a bank, and strong suspicions were everywhere abroad, that the unfortunate man had met with a cruel death by the hands of these Kearneys, who had long used open threatenings against him. The horror of the master and friends of the deserving grieve, and of the whole of the court at hearing this intelligence, need not be dwelt upon: Warrants were granted on the instant, both to make search for the body and to investigate carefully the marks and appearances of everything that should be found within the cottage of the Kearneys, which might furnish any evidence concerning the murder.

It was a melancholy and tedious work the search that took place for the lifeless body of the unfortunate young man. The cry was so unusual, and the sensation so great, that voluntary parties were formed of the people around to assist in the search, both for the sad satisfaction of the distracted widow, if she could be recovered — for the poor creature was by this time insensible to all around her — and to find legal evidence against the ruthless murderers. Every ditch was raked for many miles round, every pool and pond was dragged from Harold's Cross to the Dublin mountains; every spadeful of earth that had been recently dug up, was moved and tried below the surface, but still all in vain. Whether the body of the grieve had been thrown into the stream that runs beyond the warren, and might have been carried towards the sea before the search commenced, or whether it could have been buried under the sands at the bottom, which prevented its ever being traced, or how else it could have been disposed of was never known, but the wretched widow never had the satisfaction of seeing even the mangled corpse of him, of whom she constantly raved, nor was there legal proof exhibited of the actual murder, — for the body of Lambert was never found.

An alarming feeling came over all who knew of this murder, lest, after all, the Kearneys should, for want of evidence, be suffered to escape; for although during the search, an axe had been found in their cottage, from which the blood was imperfectly cleared, and whereon still stuck some of the clotted hair of the victim of their cruelty; and though the marks of shoes

and the print of the ribbed corderoy of a heavily set down knee, corresponding with these articles worn by the Kearneys, appeared on that spot in the warren, where an evident struggle had taken place, yet the body, never having been produced, with other legal defects in the evidence, gave alarming indication to the people round that the crafty Kearneys would yet get free of the capital charge. But the eye of heaven, that neither slumbers nor sleeps, had seen, during the darkness, what no human eye but those engaged in the murder had been suffered to witness, and decreed that such atrocity should not escape its punishment; and the law itself contained a clause which embraced the whole of those to whom vengeance was due. The malice of the Kearneys had been so inveterate, particularly since the pounding of their cow, and so openly manifested to all the neighbourhood, that it furnished out of their own mouths the means of their own condemnation—not for the actual crime which might not so clearly have been brought home to them, but for a deliberate conspiracy to murder, of which there existed abundance of evidence. Upon this point then the whole were arraigned, and though, from some circumstance the old woman, who was well understood to have instigated the whole, was reluctantly acquitted, the three men, namely, the father and his two sons, were tried and condemned to suffer on the very spot beyond Harold's Cross where the horrid deed was supposed to have been perpetrated.

CHAPTER IV.

I am now come to speak of that sickening gliss that came over my heart at the sight which I witnessed one morning as I sat at my window, in the long suburban street as you go towards Harold's Cross from the city of Dublin. It was a quiet close morning, and drawing towards noon, when I sat musing at my window, as I say, and thinking within myself of God's goodness and man's deceipts, for the day was Monday, and certain things came soothingly over my thoughts, which I had heard in the house of prayer during the solemnities of the previous day's worship. "Surely," said I, "goodness and mercy hath still followed me all my life long, even into this discontented kingdom of the Irish, and as to the wickedness of the wicked, which is wrought in secret places of the earth, I have still been preserved, even from knowing the depth and the breadth thereof."

I was communing with myself in this comforting way, and so abstract in my inward meditation, that I did not pay any attention, although I partly saw the people beginning to lift their windows all round, and those in the street beneath, running hastily from that end of the suburb, to which my back was all the while turned. I have been often called stupid, and so I am when anything takes my thoughts away into meditative abstraction; so I never troubled myself to turn round my head, until the clatter of a host of horses' feet came over my ears from behind, and a wild cry of "the Kearneys! the Kearneys!" accompanied the sudden rising of the surrounding windows.

What a strange and impressive cavalcade was this, which, with the immense and horrified crowd that followed it, was now almost under my very window. There were horsemen behind and horsemen before, but no music or sound, such as usually accompanies a military spectacle, and the buzz and murmur that ran through the multitude had an awfulness in it, as if it were the low and deep voice of justice herself, and seemed to have the sternness mixed with the horror of a generally awarded and righteous sentence of death. There was something very dreadful in the arrangement of the cavalcade. Behind the first troop of military came three vehicles of the lowest sort used as conveyances in Ireland, called jingles; which being a species of double car, upon springs, are considerably elevated above the heads of the people. The first of these carried a temporary gallows, which was to be erected on the spot where the murder had been committed; the last contained three coffins; and in the centre jingle sat the wretched men, the excreted objects of this horrid preparation.

"Lord save us," said I, as I surveyed the whole, "but it is an awful sight, to see a father and his two sons carted off together to their death, two of them young and even handsome men, and, together with the father, such as you never could have supposed, from their looks, to be capable of committing so atrocious a deed. The three sat together in the jingle, with a bareheaded priest placed between each, and holding a crucifix close to their faces. They were all dressed in black, their arms pinioned to their sides, with the white caps of execution on their heads, and the ropes already hanging from their bared necks. The wanless of death

already gave their countenances a blanched cadaverousness, which was absolutely fearful to behold ; the young men, in particular, seemed quite overcome with the horror of guilt and of their situation, and had lost all power over themselves, so that as the vehicle jolted slowly on to their death, their heads wagged backwards and forwards with every motion, and when they ventured to try to look before or behind, their eyes fixed on the great frightful gallows, rumbling on in their view, on which they were about to be suspended by the neck, and behind came the row of coffins, which already gaped for their corpses. The crowd that moved on at their side looked up in their languid countenances with impressions such as could not easily be effaced, and the only sounds that were heard, besides the suppressed murmur of the people, was a startling howl, which now and then burst from a band of women, who followed the car bearing the coffins, among which was the wretched wife of one, and mother of two of the men whom she was, with characteristic hardness, now following to the gibbet.

The melancholy procession passed away from before my eyes, and the occasional howl of the women came with sickening impression over my ears, as the whole moved off in the distance, and as I reflected upon the miserable end of all incorrigible workers of iniquity. I was afterwards told by those who witnessed the execution, that the hardened old wretch, who had urged her family into the commission of these atrocities, had the heart to stand at the gallows' foot, while that husband and these two sons, which constituted all her earthly ties, were for the crimes to which she had encouraged them, struggling in the agonies which launched them into eternity.

But the most painful part of this whole tragedy related to the unfortunate widow of the murdered grieve, whom her terrible misfortune had entirely bereft of her senses, and for whom the sympathetic squire made ample provision, as a confirmed and hopeless lunatic. The broken-hearted widow took her unfortunate daughter back to her cottage, and willingly aided in the delusion into which the poor creature had gradually fallen—that Owen Lambert was still attending the trial of the Kearneys, from which he was hourly expected to return. Whenever, therefore, the morning was fine, the interesting maniac went forth and sat patiently on a stone at the door, to wait, as she said, until her Owen came home from Dublin.

Curiosity, and that melancholy interest with which unmerited misfortune is always invested, led me one day to swerve off my way as I went to the Dublin mountains, to try if I could see her. Sure enough, as the people there say, I did see this pretty and demented young widow, sitting as usual in the sunshine at the cottage door, and singing sillily to herself, as she carelessly knitted some trifling article. When she perceived me she rose, and looking anxiously in my face, came forward to meet me. "Begging your pardon, sir," she said in the liquid softness of the Dublin *patois*, and curtseying as she drew near, "did your honour come from Dublin this morning?"

"I did," said I sadly, observing the poor thing's look of melancholy anxiety.

"May be, sir," she continued, "you can tell me something of one Owen Lambert, that's there at the trial.—Ah, he is long, long of coming!"

"So he is," said I, "but you'll see him by-and-by."

"Will I?" she said, a gleam of joy coming over her features. "Alas! but I am weary, weary, so long waiting to meet him."

"Are you?" I said, forgetting, in my pity, the poor girl's insanity. "God help you! broken-heart—but you will meet him, I doubt not, in a better world!"

THE END.

THE

UNGUARDED HOUR;

OR,

THE MARTYRS' CROSS.

BY

JOHN GALT.

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"Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud
Without our special wonder?"

MACBETH.

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1841.

THE UNGUARDED HOUR.

A TALE.

"Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?" *MACBETH.*

MANY proverbial expressions are founded on experience. 'The unguarded hour' is one of them: and it has become so common, that few of those who oftenest employ it are aware of the mystery to which it alludes. It conveys the belief that mankind are each protected by a supernal guardian. It implies, also, that the angel at times quits his post, and that in the interim, 'the unguarded hour,' the defenceless mortal is liable to be assailed by the insidious temptations of the universal adversary. Whether this impressive thesis be an hypothesis, or an apocalypse, it baffles the human understanding. It cannot be rejected as altogether earthly, and of mortal imagination, nor accepted as divine and of celestial descent. But it is not my present purpose to examine the evidence on either side; I have only to describe a series of seeming accidents, calculated to enforce the doctrine, by the circumstances in which their advent took place, and to awaken at once solemnity, wonder, and dread.

"Many years ago," said a friend, "when detained by indisposition in a small village in Hungary, a discovery was one morning made, by which the superstition of the simple inhabitants was greatly excited. It had been a custom, from time immemorial, when the judge in office travelled through the country, to dispense justice, that as often as he came to Panigstein, and I believe it was only once in a course of the cycle of the moon, every nineteen years, and at the change, that he held a free assize in the open air, near the Martyrs' Cross, an ancient monument which stands alone on the solitude of the moor, at the distance of a bow-shot or more from the church. The cause of this venerable ceremony being held at that particular spot was never satisfactorily explained, but it originated either in a prediction which had been delivered by the martyr, or on some incident connected with his doom. On every occasion, when the court was held at this spot, the inhabitants were summoned, in the name of heaven, to hearken to the list of offenders which the magistrate of the district openly placed in the hands of the judge, and all such as could bear witness to aught regarding them, were commanded to come forward and do so.

"Although then but in shattered health, this remarkable ceremony, which chanced while I was at Panigstein, induced me to be present among the crowd of spectators when the judge was expected to arrive. The day was grey and silent; the sun was not invisible, but his dim orb hung in the firmament with an obscure lack-lustre sickliness, and all the landscape, and every living thing, seemed overcast and dejected. The ensigns of judgment which marked the place of administration added to the solemnity of the scene; and the magistrate, to augment the gloom, had ordered a lofty new and black gallows to be raised at a little distance from where the benches and table for the court had been constructed.

"Among other impressive customs connected with the free assize, is one of unknown antiquity. The magistrate, in preparing the list of offenders for the judge, is not allowed to divulge to any person the names of the criminals intended to be accused; and it is alleged that this has a religious influence on the morals of the people, no one being aware how his conduct may have been noted, nor of what he may be found charged with in the list. The crisis is, in consequence, very awful to all. On the occasion when I was there, it was not

anticipated that any particular crime would be divulged, and it was thought rather odd that the magistrate should have ordered the gallows to be erected ; indeed, in the opinion of the people, the calendar was clear, so peaceful and free from all violence had been the country from the former assize, nineteen years previous.

The magistrate I knew very well ; he had sometimes invited me to his house : was a gentleman in great esteem with the immediate villagers. From small beginnings he had raised an ample fortune, was famed for the strictest integrity, and distinguished for great benevolence and a holy purity of life. It was thought by many that there was some degree of affection in his singular piety, for in his youth he had been less austere, and he had put on his sanctity somewhat suddenly, in consequence of an event which, though distressing in itself, could not be said to affect him more than any other in the town.

It was a murder committed exactly nineteen years before the very morning when the assize was held. No trace of the assassin had been discovered, and that circumstance, together with the worth of the victim, had produced a strong impression on every one ; but on none more than this magistrate, whose faithful servant the victim had long been. The crime was mysterious, for the man was poor, and it excited universal surprise that one who, in his condition, had been so much respected, should ever have provoked a doom so sudden and inexplicable. Time had greatly mitigated the recollection of the occurrence ; it was almost forgotten by everybody but the widow, and the charitable master, who, with his family, constantly endeavoured to soften, with unavailing sympathy, her grief. She, however, became old and crazed, and, when pointed out to me, was a spectacle of extreme misery. She was standing near the Martyrs' Cross, against which, owing to my weakness, I was then leaning, and, although she appeared sullen, and perusing the ground, I observed her eyes vividly glancing with supernatural vigilance. She was as something wild and fierce, ready to leap upon its prey, and watching for the moment. But I had not much time to notice her, for the sound of trumpets proclaimed the approach of the magistrate, attended by his officers, and soon after a movement in the multitude also announced the coming of the judge.

When he had taken his seat on the judicial bench, and the lawyers had placed themselves at the table, the trumpet sounded a solemn peal three times, and the magistrate, with a roll in his hand, advanced. At the same instant the widow rushed, with a shriek like the oracular Pythia in her ecstasy, and placed herself at the side of the magistrate, as he presented the roll to the judge. The multitude was silent, and I felt as if the functions of my breathing were suspended.

The judge rose, and standing up, unrolled the paper, which, with an audible voice and religious thankfulness, he declared was clear.

"No, no," cried the impassioned and vehement widow, "it is not so, it has not my husband's death."

"True!" exclaimed the magistrate, "I had forgotten it,—the deed was done so long ago, nineteen years ago—how was it possible I could forget the unguarded-hour?"

The words were repeated by every voice, I believe, in the multitude in succession, and the sound was fearful. "The unguarded hour!" said the judge to himself, looking towards the magistrate calmly, as if the question had scarcely more meaning than when uttered in echo by the crowd.

"Yes," cried the widow aloud, "his guardian angel was then away," and she concluded by accusing the magistrate, her own benefactor, and the gracious master of her deceased husband, as the murderer.

"She has been long, almost ever since the fatal event, in a state of insanity," said the magistrate to the judge ; and turning to his officers, bade them take the helpless creature away.

"I will not go,—I will have justice," she exclaimed, wrestling with the officers as they attempted to remove her. The crowd remained as if frozen into silence.

"Good woman," said the judge compassionately, "you know not what you say."

"I do, I do : let me be heard," was her wild reply ; and the multitude in the same instant cried out, "let her be heard—let her be heard."

"This is a vexatious business," said the judge to the magistrate, "for the charter by which the assize is held at this place obliges me to receive the charge, and I cannot depart from its

ordinances, nor do her grittathinity a valid reason to reject the accusation. Good woman, why do you persist in this extravagance ; there is no evidence to sustain the charge ?

“ There is if you will listen,” she impatiently cried ; and again with earnest gestures and surprising eloquence, endeavoured, by innumerable coincidences that she had remarked in the conduct of the magistrate, to show the grounds of her sudden suspicion.

“ During the whole time that she continued speaking, the spectators listened with the greatest care, and before she had finished her impudent appeal, it was manifest that they were all convinced that the magistrate was indeed the murderer. The judge listened to all she said with intense attention, but the accused maintained his wonted equanimity. I was astonished that he could do so, for some of her reasons, though far from probability, were of the most touching and pathetic kind : doubtless all she said was void of evidence ; still, however, it was fearfully impressive, and I could not myself withstand its energy. When she had rather exhausted her strength than finished what she had to say, the judge replied solemnly—

“ Protect, us heaven, for having aught to conceal from such vigilance ; this is thy work, and comes not within the possibilities of human law ! There is reason according to the charter that a regular trial should be proceeded with, and therefore let the indictment be prepared.”

“ The feelings of the multitude were excited to the utmost, and took utterance in a loud shout, not of joy or of gladness, but a deep, solemn, and awful sound, whose might and majesty were portentously increased by the distant low bellow echo of the hills. The accused stood a statue of consternation for a moment. I looked at him with indescribable emotion, but the paleness which overspread his countenance vanished, and he appeared as serene and self-collected as before.

“ While the papers were being written, I observed the judge speaking to the poor woman, and I heard him sympathisingly inquire respecting the age of her husband, his general appearance, and the manner in which he was dressed, to which she gave brief but distinct answers, as if the living presence of the murdered man had been actually before her. She was, however, impatient at the judge’s questions, and answered him peevishly, forgetting the respect due to his dignity ; indeed the questions at the time seemed to me frivolous ; I could not discern their propriety, nor why so grave an officer, the representative of the emperor and king, should so far lose all consciousness of the place and the occasion, as to speak to her in the manner he was doing. He asked, for example, the colour of her husband’s hair, and she answered black, and that he wore his hat gallantly doffed ; then, after some other inquiries as insignificant, he spoke of his coat, and the colour of it, but she lost temper, and after telling him it was blue and his vest red, entreated he would not probe her wounded remembrance with matters of that kind.

“ In the meantime the magistrate was engaged with an advocate who was perfectly convinced, and so expressed himself, that the trial would soon be safely over. Altogether the scene was most singular, but the passion of the crowd was become appalling, and I was fearful lest the magistrate should be made the victim of some outrage. Himself calm, and certain that no evidence could sully him, he was yet visibly disturbed ; and I saw him once or twice start, and shudder—no doubt amazed, that such a delirious accusation should have been so strangely imagined against him.

“ When all the requisite forms were completed, he was directed to place himself at the bar ; and the judge, according to the charter, called him by name to answer to God, who was there present, for the crime of which he was accused. At that moment, and before he could reply, the sun darted a bright and golden ray upon the forehead of the judge, and made it shine as if he had been crowned with a halo. All the spectators were witnesses to this glorious symbol ; and I could scarcely control my trembling limbs, so much did it shake my whole frame,

“ The accused was evidently affected, but he had such mastery of himself, that he answered with firmness, ‘ Not GUILTY.’

“ A pause of some time ensued, and then the widow was requested to come forward with her evidence. She advanced, and suddenly cried, ‘ I have but these tears.’

“ The advocate with whom the accused had been consulting, rose and animadverting on the insanity of the charge, demanded an acquittal.

"Stop," said the judge solemnly, "the order and provisions of the charter have not yet been all fulfilled—bid the trumpet sound thrice."

The silence of the multitude was dreadful; the trumpet sounded, and the judge, rising from his seat, reverentially uncovered his hoary head, and said, with a voice of the lowliest humility—

"Heaven, send forth thy witness!"

"I looked at the dismayed prisoner; he was pale, but serene. The judge then resumed his seat, and the advocate again rose—

"I demand," said he, "the acquittal of the accused."

"Another short pause ensued, and the judge rising, cast his sight to a distance, and said—

"Make way for the witness."

"What witness!" cried the prisoner, in visible trepidation.

"That man in the blue coat—he with his cap on the one side—make way for him—he with the red waistcoat."

"It is himself that comes," cried the widow with an exulting shout; and all the spectators looked back towards the spot where they expected to behold the witness, but they saw no one; and when they had again turned their eyes to the bar, the accused had fainted. This confirmed the amazed spectators, and the judge knelt down with devotion, and raising his hands to heaven, prayed and did homage to Divine justice. The wretched criminal was left lying on the ground, for all present at the same moment uncovered their heads, and with tears and awe joined in worship with the judge. A more affecting scene was never witnessed; and when the adoration was ended, the guilty man, awakened from his trance, rose and confessed the crime.

"I seek not mercy," said he, "I have enjoyed it too long—yet my offence is not of an atrocious dye—it was but a hasty blow. Yes, the hand of heaven is so visible here, that I dare not ask remission, even if my hidden misery was not punishment enough; there, take me—be now no more delay. The gallows is ready, and mercy dare not in this place contend with justice."

THE END.

THE
ROMANCE
OF
THE CASTLE.

BY D. F. HAYNES, Esq.

"The day
Will come when Virtue from the cloud shall burst,
That long obscured her beams; when Sin shall fly
Back to her native hell; there sink eclipsed
In penal darkness; where no star shall rise,
Nor ever sunshine pierce the impervious gloom."

R. GLYNNE.

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THE
ROMANCE OF THE CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

"Mysterious Providence!
Thy will be done, though we her loss deplore."—ANON.

"Tis God's decree—
And is, and must be good."—FIREBORN.

The day at length arrived, so sorrowfully expected by the Count de Gras, which was to convey himself and family far from the chateau of St Croix.

The Countess de Gras with tears in her eyes stepped into the carriage, and whilst taking a last farewell of the scenes of happier times, the carriage slowly moved up the venerable avenue of trees which shaded the north wing of the chateau. They proceeded for miles along a dreary forest, the family barely exchanging a single syllable, till at length Leonora broke the unhappy silence by saying, "Pray, dear father, how far have we to travel over this dreary forest? I am already quite tired, and am much afraid that we shall be attacked." Her father kindly comforted her, and told her not to apprehend the least danger, as people frequently travelled that road, and nobody was ever known to be robbed. These balmy words reconciled Leonora to her miserable journey, and she now passed with heedless unconcern over the lonely forest, which, after winding for miles, brought them at last into a narrow bye road. The postillion inquired which road to take, and being directed, pursued his weary journey through narrow sandy lanes, which, from the oppressive heat of the sun, which had now attained its meridian glory, were rendered particularly unpleasant.

The Countess de Gras having awoke from a kind refreshing sleep, which steeped her senses into a temporary oblivion of the miserable causes of her journey, gently asked her husband how far she had to go before she would reach the place of her destination? She complained of being very much fatigued, and wished to complete her sad journey.

At last, after a mournful ride, they came in sight of the villa. It was a small cottage situated at the base of a stupendous mountain, whose summit was fringed with waving ash and other light shrubs: a little wood surrounded the mansion, a view from which was rendered peculiarly pleasant by the delightful lawn before it, through which wended in a serpentine direction a beautiful clear stream.

The position of the place was altogether vastly agreeable, but ill corresponded with the stately chateau, grand park, and majestic avenue of trees which shaded the north wing of the chateau, and which marked the features of the count's family domain. The postillion having driven up to the door, the Count de Gras and family proceeded to examine the apartments, which they found to their utmost satisfaction, most comfortably fitted up, which in their present situation was all they desired.

After supper was finished, the count desired to speak a few words with Henry, who retired instantly with his father.—After a short pause, Henry broke the unhappy silence by asking his father, in a mild tone of voice, what were his commands?

The count satisfied his request thus:—

"It materially concerns me that, during this my present lonely solitude, I am forced to part with one of my dearest comforts. I had fondly anticipated that your society in this dreary place would have greatly contributed to ward off the sorrows of fate with which I am at present so heavily oppressed; but I am denied my last happiness. I have received an order from the

colonel of your regiment requesting your immediate presence; as the regiment is ordered on foreign service, and your name is marked to go. I cannot infringe on the articles of war, or be so foolish against reason, or so ungenerous to my child, as to wish him to stay away. No, my dear son, no! If I was not in the circumstances which I am in now, I should rejoice in happy pleasure that my dear child should have an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and performing the duties of his profession with honour to his family and credit to himself, for which his heart now so ardently pants. But I now cannot but deplore the stern decree, which I am concerned to add is irrevocable; and as you will probably stay some little time at the dépôt, previous to your departure; as you will be consequently mixed with a numerous society of young officers, who will no doubt exhort you to follow their military amusements and dissipated life, which in your present circumstances would but ill suit you, and indeed in any reflect but little honour, and afford but small satisfaction hereafter; and as I think a little advice from the lips of a father, who values the happiness of his son above all other things, will not be grating to your feelings, I shall take this opportunity before you depart of giving you some slight hints with respect to your conduct, which I know you will thankfully embrace and willingly follow."

"My dear father," said Henry, "rely on my integrity and strength of mind to follow your indulgent advice; and believe me, that when far distant from you all, I shall often look back with pleasure to those hours in which I received the parental advice of a most kind, affectionate, and indulgent father! Believe me, my dear parent, that when far from you all I shall often think of you and drop a tear as memory will recall the subject of your affection! Your just admonitions may I ever religiously follow, not only from respect to you, but in relation to my future happiness!"

The Count de Gras said, "I do not in the least doubt the integrity of your assertions, nor the ingenuousness of your nature, and am so well convinced of the strength of your mind, that your noble pride might perhaps suggest that my present hints are useless; but as experience can alone wholly form the mind, and as I have sorrowfully run its gauntlet, I can faithfully inform you of the fatal illusions of theory, and how extensively they differ from practice. Your youth, relation, and inexperience have an ample claim on my attention; and as it concerns the welfare of my affectionate son, I hope you will listen to those dictates of experience which I am bound by nature to give you.

"Let it, my dear boy, be your first study and care to instruct yourself in that part of your profession which will be the most likely to be called into action: the other you can study at leisure. Pay a proper respect to your superiors in rank, as far as military etiquette and the principles of good breeding will prescribe. Receive all the advice which their experience will enable them to give you with gratitude. And as I should wish you to be courteous and obliging to all, still nevertheless I am not anxious to instil in your mind the worthless principles of an abject courtesy and servile submission to your superiors: discover a proper spirit, and treat them with becoming modesty, and suffer no man to take a liberty with you with impunity. Yet, on the other hand, do not be too scrutinising in your observations, and too sensible in your penetration, which may sometimes lead a young man into error; for many are led away by a ruinous and fatal opinion, that if a duel does not mark the commencement of their military career, they will soon acquire the character of a coward. How absurd and ridiculous! May you never, my dear Henry, pay court to the votaries of so fatal a passion. Cool intrepidity and a delicate sense of honour are not exemplified in an ardent wish and sanguine thirst after duelling: a brave man will always decline fighting; his courage will suggest that the best restoratives which can be applied to his wounded pride, are an amicable reconciliation and honourable interference. Be kind and candid with your men; show a spirit of strict duty in the field, but on other occasions put off the commanding tone and authoritative demeanour of the officer, and assume the appearance of the friend; conciliate their affections, make them both ready to obey and zealous to do anything for you. With your equals be friendly and sociable: do not profess too great an affection for any of your brother officers till you have put to the test their merits and demerits. Curb your passions, and indulge in no vicious excesses; avoid the seductive charms, and check the fatal propensities, which are the inseparable attendants on a military career. So many are the incentives which stimulate the mind of a military officer to the principles of vice and dissipation, that they need

not the voice of reason, but run headlong down a precipice of destruction : plunged into the vortex of dissipation, in vain may you endeavour to emerge from it ; reason tries in vain to resume her seat in the racked brain and perturbed imagination of the abandoned wretch ; and still more avoid, my dear Henry, the more dangerous propensities, intoxication, gaming, and seduction. To dwell too long on the subject of these vices, would instigate you to believe that I am doubting the strength of your mind in resisting them. I shall conclude this my long advice by assuring you, that as you advance in manhood, and as experience withdraws the fascinating veil of youthful imagination, you will find that all the pleasures and hopes of this gay and alluring world end altogether in tasteless vanity and pitiable disappointment. The wearied pleasure-seeker sinks beneath the languor of his enjoyments ; the haggard looks and wily casts of the gamester's features strongly denote the foulness of his intentions. Perhaps you might read in his countenance the traits of a once amiable and virtuous youth ; but now every ray of hope, every prospect of recovery, is darkened by the ways which the practices of that horrid vice led him into. Again, multiplied and diversified as are the scenes of pleasure, they cannot ever exist : the matured mind is soon disgusted with the perpetual round of dancing and feasting ; it feels an inclination to steal away from the infections of vice and the blandishments of seduction. That friendship also which links together the military by the bonds of vice and wickedness, is soon dissolved ; the seeds of enmity are often sown for those of sincerity ; and those individuals who once went by the common appellation of sworn friends in the circle of their dissipated pursuits are now bitter foes, and exploring every engine of malice by which they may hurl destruction on each other. I well know that my dear Henry will never profess so dishonourable an intimacy with anybody ; at least I trust not ; for nothing can be more criminal and absurd than to assert those things which are foreign to our mind."

Henry was deeply affected at the picture of iniquity which his father had so justly drawn. He said that he was concerned to reflect on the unsteady actions and vicious practices of the military ; and added, that he sincerely and ardently hoped he would never disgrace himself so much, and wound the peace of his family by following any wicked life or dissipated habits.

The count taking hold of Henry's hand, whilst the big tear of affection rolled heavily in his eye, said, "Accept, my dearest Henry, my best thanks ! You have made your mother, your sister, and myself all happy. I can rely on your confidence, and consign you to the storms of fate and worldly temptations in perfect and strong reliance on your virtue and ingenuousness." The count, looking at his watch, was astonished to find that it was so late. He proceeded with Henry to the supper room, which was involved in solemn obscurity, for the faint glimmerings of the dying taper had long been extinct. The countess and Leonora had retired, leaving the count with Henry, thinking that he had something of importance to communicate to him. Nor was it long afterwards before the father and son paid nature's tribute. They both passed a very restless night ; the one reflecting on the short time that he should have to indulge in the pleasure of his son's society, the other reflecting and pondering in his mind the weight of his affectionate speech. He was resolved to follow what his father had taken such pains to inculcate on his mind, was determined to vanquish the passions of youth, and combat with the difficulties of his station in life.

He awoke early the next morning, for the sun gleaming on his windows, which fronted the east, summoned him to rise from the couch of the drowsy god. He awoke, and dressing himself, took a walk on the lawn, and was most agreeably surprised at meeting his sister Leonora, who had also risen to taste the sweet refreshing dew of the balmy morning.

Leonora approached him, and taking hold of his arm, said, "How do you do, my dear brother ? What a lovely morning is this ! I am rejoiced to see you up so early, but I am afraid that you have not slept well ; your eyes look heavy, your spirits are dejected : tell me, my dearest brother, what is the cause of this uneasiness ? Great indeed is the common misfortune of our afflicted family, but this is some unusual calamity. What is it ? Can I assist you ? Can I give you any comfort ?"

Henry replied, "Charming, adorable Leonora ! cease to discompose yourself ; you shall presently be acquainted with all, if you will but sit down under the shade of this venerable oak tree."

Leonora, who eagerly swallowed up every expression that escaped his lips, was impatient to know his tale. Henry sat down by her side, and briefly told her of the order which forced him to join his regiment as it was immediately ordered on service.

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Leonora burst into a flood of tears, and said, " Will you be so cruel, dear brother, as to leave me alone in this solitary abode? Will you exile yourself from her who had fondly rested all her hopes of future happiness on your society? But cruel did I say! No, I did not mean it; it is the command of your superiors, and as you have engaged in the profession of arms, it is your duty to follow it up with spirit." A sigh escaped her as she said these words, for memory awakened in her mind the happy time in which Henry first embarked in his military career.

" Can you not stay at the least a month longer? Oh, can you not find some excuse to follow them?"

" That is quite impossible," rejoined Henry, " as the regiment is under orders to march immediately."

" Oh, ill-fated time! Oh, exquisite misery!" exclaimed Leonora. " Added to the most unexampled baseness and agonizing sufferings, I am forced to bid a tender adieu to my dear Henry,—ah! perhaps a final adieu. Perchance I may never see him again; he may be buried in the ruins of that bloody carnage that awaits him. The bleeding woes of our family will never be dried up: woe upon woe, misery upon misery. Oh, Henry, how shall I support myself during your long absence? at this time I feel it with exquisite sensibility. To be sure a virtuous and affectionate father and mother will be left to console me; but still, when family duties occupy their attention, and when worldly affairs call them away from me, who have I to walk with—with whom may I converse? Alas! the only person which kind nature bestowed on me, as it were, to alleviate the hardships of this place, is now going to leave me to myself and to my sad reflections. Be it so; it is the fate of your profession, and I will cease to wound your feelings with my feminine weakness. May my letters convey all the intelligence which this lonesome place will afford, whilst I shall embrace yours with rapturous delight, and dwell on their contents with an affectionate solicitude and childish sorrow; I say sorrow, because it will remind me of the precarious situation in which you are placed, and of the miseries, hardships, and insults of your station; but I trust I shall often hear from you."

" Believe me, my dear sister, that every leisure moment I have to spare shall be dedicated to the duties of our sacred correspondence."

The hour of breakfast being now at hand, our young couple slowly moved to the humble mansion, where they found their father and mother, who had been anxiously awaiting them. They were eagerly interrogated where they had been.

Henry said that they had both taken a long walk, being induced by the peculiar beauty and mildness of the morning.

The count and countess had been up about an hour, during which period the count communicated to madame the subject of last night's conversation with Henry. She was deeply afflicted at the sudden departure of her son, but acquiesced in humble resignation to the fate of his profession.

The party sat down to a comfortable and homely repast. The luxurious viands that formerly covered the table of the count, the rich wines that sparkled in the cup, the costly magnificence of the furniture, and the stately pageantry of the attendants, were now exchanged for a plain and family meal, home-made wines, and simple furniture; two venerable and faithful domestics supplied the place of an host of pampered and treacherous menials, and only one solitary carriage was the relic of the display of his former lordly equipage. But this was not all that hurt him; this part of his deprivation he would have willingly passed over; but the peculiar circumstances which instigated this reverse of fortune were enough to cut his soul, and touch his feelings to the quick. His only sister sacrificed to the lawless passion of a man of whom he knew nothing, and perhaps at this time wandering in some lonely desert, constituted his misery.

The count often exclaimed in an impassioned tone, that if he could once hear anything of his dear sister, he would gladly resign the chateau and all its stately appendages for her happiness and comfort; but no, not the least ray of intelligence cheered his drooping spirits; his sister torn from him, himself and family exiled from the family mansion, were obliged to drag out a miserable, and perhaps an unpitied existence, in the depths of lonely solitude and sorrowful reflection.

The shattered remains of his splendid fortune barely enabled him to support his family in a comfortable manner. A small villa, or rather a cottage, which he had received from his sister, the Countess de Santá, comprised the seat of his dwelling. His wife bore this vicissitude of fortune very poorly, and the intended departure of her son brought on a fever; but from which she soon recovered by the unwearied assiduity and affectionate attention of Leonora. This happiness had, however, its accompanying evil, for she found that Henry had departed without bidding her adieu, she being too ill to see him.

The doctor forbade her seeing her son on any account during her indisposition, as he suggested to the count the danger that might possibly arise in the present case from the too sudden and violent agitation of the spirits.

The countess was so much grieved at not seeing Henry previous to his departure, and suffering it to prey upon her spirits, that it brought on a violent relapse; which, assuming the most formidable and distressing aspect, induced the count to send for medical assistance, which was immediately procured.

The physician was ushered into the room of the Count de Gras, whom he found oppressed with the deepest grief. On seeing the medical gentleman he was greatly agitated, and begged he would sit down. After a few minutes' painful conversation, the count showed him into the sick chamber.

The countess was in the height of a raging fever; the doctor from the first sight pronounced her in danger, but consoled the family by saying, that patience and great care might effect a cure.

The countess passed a bad night, and her indisposition was violently increasing. Leonora, who had scarcely left her bed-side, was alarmed at the approaching dreadful symptoms. She wept bitterly, and the departure of her brother at this agonizing crisis rose to her mind in the strongest light.

The countess took hold of Leonora's hand, and with a sweet smile and dignified expression asked her to read to her. Leonora gently remonstrated that she was afraid it would fatigue her, and declined, as she was fearful it would increase her disorder.

The approaching dissolution of the countess was now visible to all around, although she, poor woman, was quite unconscious of it; and so great was the grief of Leonora that she could no longer stay in the room with her dying mother, but retired to the study of her father, to give vent to her feelings, which she had tried to control in the presence of the countess.

The worthy count came near his wife, and was deeply afflicted; nothing but grief and sorrow reigned on his brow. The countess was asleep; he gazed on her celestial loveliness with fond delight, but it was mixed with anguish, for the fair form now before him, he but too well knew, would be soon eternally wrested from him.

Whilst he was indulging in the most excessive and uncontrolled grief, the surgeon came in; he immediately retired.

The doctor approaching the bed, and taking hold of the pulse of the countess, found that her death was rapidly approaching. She was quite insensible, and spoke not a word.

He retired to the count's room, and was forced to communicate to him the sad tidings. He endeavoured to alleviate his distress as much as possible, and comfort him by drawing the most pleasing and satisfactory picture of his faithful exertions. He told him that he had done all that art could suggest, or ingenuity invent, but the course of nature could not be stopped, and begged him to resign himself to the irrevocable decree of the ruthless tyrant, who snatches with indifference the young and the old, the light and the grave, the peasant and the prince.

So overwhelmed with grief and sorrow was the mind of the count, that he heeded not the balmy comfort of the tender man.

The surgeon left him for a moment, and hearing a dreadful shriek, found Leonora bathing with tears the corpse of her mother.

The doctor was affected beyond measure at the tragic scene; he advanced and uttered words of comfort to Leonora. She heeded them not; she was riveted to the spot; her eyes were fixed on the pallid countenance of her departed mother; and so great was her grief, that her mind made a dead stop, and dismissed the empty aid of the senses.

The surgeon now proceeded to acquaint the count with the dreadful event, who heard it with a dignified resignation; and after a short, but awful pause, in a firm, but in a hollow tone

of voice, he said, " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ! "

His chief aim was now to console the miserable and afflicted Leonora, in whose arms the countess expired. The heavy stroke of fate had so forcibly struck her senses as almost to deprive her of the faculty of weeping.

The countess throughout her illness exhibited the mild composure of the dying christian, in sure and certain hopes of a better life. During the most violent stages of her indisposition, she discovered a pious resignation, and painted that happiness which awaited her in the most lively and glowing colours. She retraced the course of her life and (what few can say on the bed of sickness) was pleased with the retrospection.

During the awful calm which preceded her death, and at that crisis of her indisposition when her faculties were perfectly sound, she gave Leonora some tender advice, and told her to make religion her only guardian ; to follow it in all her actions, and so conduct herself through life, that she will never be ashamed of her existence, or never be unfit to die, but to be always prepared and willing for eternity.

May the memory of the departed countess be everlastingly remembered by all who knew her ! If not her person, her virtues spread abroad her fame in the most conspicuous manner. The charitable christian, the dutiful wife, the affectionate mother, and the virtuous woman shone with eminent lustre in the countess. Her transcendent brightness will be an example to her family, whilst it is to be hoped that her virtues will exist in every body's breast.

Her death was a severe stroke to the count at this critical period ; reflection of the past added to the misery of the present, burst with all its horrors on his mind, yet he bore the divine dispensation with singular meekness.

Leonora's grief knew no bounds ; in vain did consolation grant her the least ray of comfort ; in vain were the kind and affectionate expostulations of her father directed to mitigate her sorrows ; for so touching and pathetic was the scene, and so affecting the death of her mother, that it was indelibly imprinted on her mind, and plunged her senses into a settled melancholy and irreclaimable grief.

The funeral of the countess having taken place, one evening, when the count was walking out with Leonora, they met a mourning coach. Recollection harrowed up her very soul ; the victim of ungovernable grief, she burst into a flood of tears, and clinging round the waist of her father, she leaned on his breast, and there sighed those feelings which were too exquisite to express.

When the first gust of affliction had subsided, and reason began to resume her seat, she contemplated the scene with a religious pleasure ; and being now composed, her father took hold of her arm, and thus gently chided her :—

" I am really much concerned to see you give way so much to your affliction ; you must not pass your time away in unavailing lamentation ; the active duties of life must wipe away the sorrows of calamity, and teach you to acquiesce in humble and pious resignation to the decrees of Providence ; for after the tributary tear is paid to departed worth, it is both selfish and unprofitable to indulge in excessive sorrow. Can tears recall the image of our grief ? Can the grace of sensibility give us comfort in distress ? No ! it is useless to indulge in sad mourning, and it is only ultimately productive of increased anguish and multiplied affliction.

" I well know, my dear Leonora, that it is natural for you to imagine that you will for ever be a stranger to happiness ; but calmly expostulate with yourself. Are we sent into this world to pass our time in tears and lamentations ? Are the miseries and troubles of this world to be compared with those never-fading joys and that blissful immortality that await us in eternity ? Undoubtedly not. Our present pilgrimage is only a trial of our strength and fortitude, and the more we give way, the more we shall eventually have to answer for ; besides, is not your blessed mother freed from the pains and miseries of this mortal life, who, flushed with the brightest prospects of a happy eternity, has cast off the form of her clay tenement, from which the soul will take its happy flight to scenes where joys will be experienced of which the human mind can form no conception ? We have every reason to hope that her upright conduct, through this transitory and perishable world, has been such as to secure her a passage to those glorious mansions of eternal bliss, where happiness, crowned with never-fading laurels, awaits the virtuous, where myriads of beings are smiling in the presence of their Creator,

and are enjoying that pure and uninterrupted happiness which, by their good conduct in this life, they had secured to themselves. Ought we not, my dear Leonora, to rejoice that it has pleased the sovereign disposer of all human events to take unto him the soul of your dear mother? Ought we not to bless Providence for releasing her from all the torments of this life, and from ceasing to expose her to its sorrowful vicissitudes, evil temptations, and wily deceit?"

"I well know how truly, my dear father, to appreciate the extent of your sublime expositation, and cannot but conclude my past sorrow to have been selfish and unpraiseworthy. I now rejoice that my sainted parent is snatched from the pains and miseries of this mutable existence, and that the king of terrors has consigned her to the prince of peace. I trust that I shall now be able to regulate the course of my tender passion, although, when reflection shoots across my mind, it damps the glow of youth, and puts a period to all my wonted fortitude, which I nevertheless thought would have borne me up against all the sorrows of fate and the dispensations of Providence; but in the heavy and affecting scene which has recently occurred," a sigh escaped her as these words were uttered, "I find it fails me, and plunges my senses into childish weakness. But for your sake, my dear father, will I cease to mourn; ah! I will cease to harass your mind with such melancholy repetitions; time and patience will, I hope, eradicate the weeds of affliction, which, I am afraid, have taken root in my mind; but I will take care to stop their growth, if not for mine, for your sake."

"Accept my warmest thanks, my dear Leonora," said the count. "I find that your mind is fraught with all the dignified grace of Christian fortitude, where most it fails at first; when the mask of delusion is unveiled, it resumes its wonted firmness, and breaks out with more lustre and transcendent brightness."

"Your compliments, my dear father, I hope I shall ever merit," replied Leonora; "and I will now resign myself to that sorrow which I find mocks my spirits to elude; I now find that the strength of fortitude far better becomes me than the expression of grief."

The evening was drawing in fast; the sun began to decline, and gradually lost itself behind the western range of mountains; the forest tops were tinged with a golden hue, the unfriendly tribute of its dying rays; the shades of night began to thicken; the sable queen of darkness resumed her throne, and reigned in gloomy triumph.

The count and Leonora now made all possible haste to reach the cottage, where all nature was enveloped in darkness.

CHAPTER II.

"Why do I live, when I desire to be—
At once from life and life's long labour free!"—CRABBE.

THE count and Leonora passed their time for six months in a very mournful manner: nothing contributed to enliven the gloom of their solitude: they became the prey of grief, and in vain did they try to shake off the evil demon; for the count but too truly found, that it is at all times easier to give than to follow good advice.

The postman brought a letter to them one morning, which was from Leonora's aunt, who resided about a league from Paris, and who wished very much to have the pleasure of their society for a month or six weeks.

The count asked Leonora if she should like to go. "Perhaps," said the kind parent, "the gay scenes of Paris may contribute to shake off the grief and dejected spirits in which you indulge at present. Perhaps a short adieu to such scenes of misery may contribute to diminish, if not totally to obliterate, their precepts from your mind, and may tend to assuage and compose those feelings which sighings and lamentations have rendered so distressing."

"Never, ah! never, can I forget this place," replied Leonora. "Eye-witness of that which has already filled my mind with a sacred awe and dreadful fear, I never can forget the hour which deprived me of the best of mothers. I never can forget the happy manner in which she left this guilty world, and the tender and affectionate advice which she gave me on her death-bed. But as I think that a visit to my aunt's will restore my spirits, I readily and thankfully accept her kind invitation. When we return, we shall be more composed, and our feelings matured to these scenes of exquisite affliction. I long to hear from my brother Henry;

I am in anxious expectation of a reply to my epistle. Ah! poor Henry, thou art ignorant of the distress which awaits thee; didst thou know that thy departure accelerated the dissolution of thy sainted mother, thou wouldest curse the hour that ever you entered on the profession of arms, since it is productive of such misery and heart-felt sorrow."

"Cease, my dear Leonora," rejoined the count; "I will take care that all shall be comfortably settled with Henry; but I am much afraid that the peculiar circumstances in which he is placed will not allow him to write to you. But compose yourself, my dear Leonora; time will explain the mystery amongst many others, which will, I am afraid, attend our family. The sum of our affliction and persecution is not yet finished, and I am anxious to fortify your mind against the arrival of fresh calamities."

The count, who now perceived that Leonora was growing sick with misery, stopped his conversation, for her senses were absorbed with grief.

Being now a little recovered, she fondly and eagerly asked her father why she should be deprived of one of her only consolations?

"That," replied the father, "is a problem which I cannot yet solve; you must endure with patience the circumstances which deprive him of the pleasure of writing to you."

So hardened with grief, and familiarized to sorrow, was the mind of Leonora, that she submitted humbly to the will of fate. They now retired to bed; kind nature steeped her senses in sleep, and granted her a temporary oblivion to her heart-rending woes.

They proposed to visit Santá chateau the next day.

Leonora arose early in the morning, and arranged all her things for her journey.

The sun had just burst from the fleecy cloud which shaded the blushing horizon; the dew, that covered the face of nature, the big pearl, and brilliant drops of variegated hues, that hung suspended from the branches of the trees, the sweet scents that floated on the air, and the solemn stillness of the scene, seemed to reanimate the soul, and awakened the most pleasing and sublime sensations; but short was her triumph; for as the dew disappeared, and nature began to unveil itself, so did the busy world begin its daily toil; its noisy votaries were now awake; that solemn and sublime stillness which reigned some time ago in tranquil majesty, was now exchanged for a noisy and turbulent triumph.

Leonora retired to the cottage, where she found her father already prepared for the journey. In a few minutes the chaise was at the door; and, after having made a slight repast, she gave her things to her father, and stepped into the carriage with a lighter heart than what she was wont to experience.

The road they had to travel to Paris was very pleasant, and was rendered still more agreeable and interesting from the multiplicity of carriages that they met on the road.

Leonora appeared translated into other regions; the vast concourse of people, the various carriages and horsemen, formed a pleasing contrast to her late lonely and miserable solitude. Her spirits were now visibly improving, and it gave the count heartfelt satisfaction to witness her resign that languor and depression of spirits for her wonted agreeable manner and interesting conversation. But still, nevertheless, although she combated with grief and affliction, and endeavoured to shake off her melancholy as much as nature would allow her, at certain times, when left to herself, she often mused in gloomy sorrow over the mournful scenes which had recently filled her mind with such genuine distress.

Leonora, during the whole of her journey, was alternately thinking of the mysterious reasons which instigated the silence of her brother, and it grieved her much to think that she was ignorant of the causes; but, born for sorrow and affliction, she bore the stern decree of fate with commendable fortitude.

They now came in sight of Santá chateau, the beautiful situation of which had always been gladly owned by each. The stately chateau reared its gray turrets far above the tops of the lofty pines which composed the amphitheatre in which the mansion was situated. It commanded a noble and striking view of Paris and the Seine, for behind the dark and aged forest were seen the towering summits of Notre-Dame.

The Countess de Santá had long been waiting in anxious expectation their arrival, when suddenly perceiving a chaise drive up the long walk, she made no doubt but that it contained her guests; her ideas were soon verified, for in a few minutes she clasped the lovely Leonora to her breast.

"How do you do, my dearest niece?" said the countess. "I am so happy to see you; I hope the gay scenes of Paris and our friends will contribute to enliven and to restore your spirits."

The count testified his pleasure at seeing his worthy sister so well, and also gave her a most delightful account of their journey, and how materially it had already tended to mend Leonora's spirits.

Leonora having passed some time with the countess in her room, and dinner being finished, a walk was proposed, which was willingly accepted by all the party.

Taking hold of Leonora's arm, and being followed by the count, they took a promenade once round the park, the romantic and beautiful situation of which greatly pleased Leonora, for it was wild amidst cultivation, retired amidst tumult, and added to the ingenuity of art all the superior advantages of nature. Leonora had a complete tête-à-tête with her aunt, during which time the count walked on to look at his horses.

Leonora now proceeded to give the countess a circumstantial detail of the misery of the cottage, and of the affecting death of her dear mother. On the latter she dwelt with tender pathos and affectionate emphasis, and described it in so tender and pathetic a manner as brought tears of sympathy from her aunt.

The affecting account wrung her feelings with gentle pity; and in the warmth of her grateful sympathy she assured her niece that she would always find in her a second mother.

Leonora quickly said, "I am too sensible, my dear aunt, of your affection and kindness; and I cannot but take this opportunity of regretting my own sad incapability of ever making you any suitable return."

"Do not distress yourself, my dear Leonora," said the countess; "the ties of nature, relationship, and affection, enforce it on me as a duty to befriend your orphan state; and although the sun of affluence may not dart its rays on me with such warmth and favour as it has hitherto been wont to do, still may I in the silent shade of adversity ever find a safe retreat for you; and may I ever comfort and assuage those feelings, and mitigate the sorrow of your case, which distress and affliction have rendered so peculiarly pitiable!—But why am I reminding you of your calamities? Why stir up your memory to objects which were once so dear to you, alas! now for ever gone! No; let me dry up your tears, and cast a shade of oblivion over all your heart-rending woes and unutterable anguish.

"I have proposed, my dear Leonora, that you stay here for six months; and rest assured that nothing shall be wanting in my power to make your abode homely and comfortable."

"Ah, my dear aunt, you are too good," replied Leonora; "you fetch tears of affection: words will not allow me the faculty of expressing my feelings! Ah! may your homely roof teach me to forget those sorrows which I have foolishly suffered to prey on my spirits!"

The count met them at the end of the grove, as they were repairing towards the chateau.

The melancholy and sober tint of grey twilight shaded the face of nature; the moon had just ascended the horizon, and hung high her silver lamp in the brilliant concave; sunset had ripened the beauties of nature, which were involved in dubious shades; the blue ether was spangled with bright gems, which shone in unfading glory in the heavens above. They now gained the mansion.

Leonora's spirits were greatly alleviated by the tête-à-tête with her aunt; she anticipated much from it, and resigned all her cares to the pleasures of expectation.

The count desired to speak a few words with the countess in the adjoining room.

The Countess de Santá immediately retired.

Leonora, during their conversation, amused herself with reading some poetry.

The countess having retired into an adjoining room, the count began his conversation thus:

"I am now, my dear madam, going to give you a full and accurate account of the circumstances which have forced me to quit my chateau, and at the same time to live on your bounty.

"Know, then, that last autumn a Monsieur L'Oiseau became intimately acquainted with my sister. From the first interview that took place between them a mutual attachment and ardent love commenced, which soon grew up into the most strong and unabated affection. This gentleman made proposals of marriage, which I resolutely refused, and hinted to him that his company could be dispensed, as from certain family impediments I could not give him

the hand of my sister. But this did not in the least damp the glow of his ardent affection, which raged with such ungovernable bounds as induced him to play the part of the villain. wifflie it to say, that he eloped with my sister in the dead of the night, and with him secured the title-deeds of the chateau, &c. You may easily guess how grieved and astonished I was at her departure. I made all possible inquiry, sent my vassals in all directions to discover their route, and offered immense sums of money to anybody who should discover the lovers, or give me such information as would enable me to reach them. But vain were all my inquiries—useless all my searches. I now gave my sister up as lost, as sacrificed to the lawless passion of a monster; who, deaf to the voice of humanity, and all the common ties of nature—who, under the specious plausibility of an ardent affection, robbed me of my dearest comfort. Under the smiling surface of his wily countenance lay the haggard visage of the lurking villain. Added to the most unexampled baseness, he has loaded himself with the crime of the most daring robbery. Not satisfied with ruining my sister, he has plundered the deeds of my mansion. I am now left to the mercy of the wide world, without any aid save yours, and the wretched relics of my mangled property. Poverty and all its miserable concomitants stare me in the face.

" The author of these wrongs is far away from me. Ah ! he has eluded the judgment of justice, and insults my sufferings. To whom shall I look for redress but to thee, O thou omniscient Being, who, if not in this world, will in the next punish the wicked hand which has poured such misery, affliction, and distress on me and my family ! But strange are the circumstances which attend this robber of my peace : nobody has heard a syllable of him. The Marquis de Saint Puffet has seized the chateau, and has produced the deeds to justify his claim. This marquis is a perfect stranger to me. In vain may I endeavour to dispossess him of his unlawful property ; he is powerful in interest and authority, a friend at court, and popular in the minds of all. His name impresses all with a secret dread. He is the terror of the surrounding country. All implicitly obey his commands : a look is sufficient to enforce his orders. But, withal, he is popular through fear more than esteem. How vain, how useless, would be my endeavours to combat with him : grief and affliction would crown my exploits, and add fresh misery to my mind ! The exquisite sorrow which I am afraid is immutably entailed on this family, makes me shudder for the consequences. The glowing affection and dauntless courage of my son would, despite of all power, interest, or wealth, stimulate him to revenge himself on the author of my wrongs. He is placed in a critical situation, and I greatly fear the consequences that will ensue. The Marquis de Saint Puffet is the colonel of his regiment ; and should my son know that by his baseness and treachery his father is wronged, he will lift up his arm in defence of a father whom he loves and reveres. But thy triumphs, my son, will, I am afraid, be crowned with multiplied sorrow and fresh oppression. Can you think to obtain redress from him who is surrounded by power, affluence, and impenetrable grandeur, and whose mind is fraught with villainy, artifice, and deceit ? Can you think that, after he has got possession of our family mansion, he will not use every engine of cunning and vice to supplant our just claims ? Ah ! my dear son, I sadly predict that a deluge of woe will issue from the distressing situation in which you are placed. But, my dear madam, I think the only way to avert these impending evils, will be to keep my son in perfect ignorance of the baseness of his colonel. He will then be at ease, and he will not know what misery I am suffering. But why must I alienate his knowledge from this affair ? Perhaps his interference might restore us our lost possessions ; but, ah ! the weak power that supports him will be too feeble to direct its force against so strong an enemy, who would use the most iniquitous means to accomplish the victory over innocence. But the time will come, my dear madam, when he will have to answer for his baseness. A friend of mine in his regiment has given me all this information, and, with much good sense and foresight, has concealed it from my son till he is acquainted with my wishes. I have written to him, thanking him for his intelligence, and charging him most strictly to keep Henry in utter ignorance of the whole, which I think advisable in the present case."

" I was partly acquainted," rejoined the Countess de Santá, " with the history of your woes ; and your melancholy account is only a confirmation of that report which, from the first time that it was in circulation, I but too sadly was forced to attach credit to. Powerful as the Marquis de Saint Puffet is, it would be useless to endeavour to expose his unjust claims,

or gain justice; you must wait with patience till something favourable transpires, by which you may bring him to court; meantime I will do all in my power to render your existence as comfortable as possible, and Leonora will always find in me, as I told her before, a second mother."

The count was quite overwhelmed with gratitude; he was going to speak, but nature mocked the effort.

The countess perceiving the state of his mind, assured him that she would endeavour to make him and his family as happy as she could, and told him that the only return which she wished was his sincerity and affection.

The count wept; tears supplied the place of words, and he received the protestations of the countess with unaffected gratitude and heartfelt satisfaction.

The house clock beat the midnight hour; this was a warning to them from Somanus.

They immediately obeyed his summons.

Leonora had long retired to rest.

The next day the countess invited some friends to dine with her from Paris, amongst whom was a very pleasant young man, a Monsieur de Gernier, who had been introduced to the countess about four months, and finding him very agreeable, had asked him to all her parties.

He was an officer in the king's service, and having obtained leave of absence through indisposition (but from which he was now nearly recovered) he had taken lodgings in Paris.

Madame Santá was particularly pleased with him. He had just attained the age of manhood; his features were fine, manly, and expressive; he added to a graceful manner and a noble spirit a quick sensibility of heart and a most lively imagination, whilst his manners partook of a happy mixture of gravity and mildness.

He was much struck with Leonora, and, with all the elegance of a Parisian beau, paid her many flattering compliments. She received them with coy unwillingness and unaffected modesty.

Nor did he make any slight impression on Leonora. She admired his person, and was pleased with his conversation, which was soft, elegant, and interesting.

The countess invited him and his friend, a Monsieur Duclès, to spend a few weeks with her at Santá chateau, which was willingly accepted.

Their time was passed in fishing and water parties, morning rides, raffles, and drives to Paris.

They often went to the libraries, and subscribed to all the places of public amusement.

Monsieur Duclès's manner was not so agreeable as that of Monsieur de Gernier; he was proud and reserved; vain in his ideas of his person and abilities; of strong passions, but seldom gave anybody an opportunity of particularizing any merit or demerit; his general studied manner, haughty aspect, and sullen deportment, carried with him the air of a man whose heart was insensible to the tender feelings of nature; who lived but to criticise, not to admire; who took pleasure in depreciating all good, and ridiculing any established thing.

The lovely complexion of Leonora's merits would have thawed the most frozen heart. The impression which it made on his, however great, he concealed. When he spoke to her, it was in so stiff and confined a manner as both hurt and surprised her; hurt her, because she was afraid that she had affronted him; and surprised her, because his conduct seemed so perfectly incompatible with the softness, elegance, and lightness of Paris.

She knew not what to apprehend from his austerity of manner.

What a contrast, thought she, did it produce with that of De Gernier; the one mild, but dignified; the other gloomy, reserved, and morose.

Monsieur Duclès was an officer in the same regiment with De Gernier; he was generally liked, and admired for his talents. Those who knew the turn of his passions, could lead him like a child. He was quick in feeling, and resentful in his revenge; of a gay temper, and courted the light passions, but withal he was brave and honourable.

Such was the friend of De Gernier, and such the visitor of Madame Santá.

As Leonora saw more of him, her ideas of fear began to soften, and she now witnessed his gloomy reserve without emotion.

De Gernier had made an honourable impression on her mind. He was constantly with her in all her amusements and walks; their sentiments were congenial, and their conversation ever mutually rolled on the same topic.

She often mentioned to him the name of her brother, and wished that he had such a friend. Madame Santá proposed going to a ball at Paris. All the party went save the Count de Gras, who had not yet gone to any place of public amusement.

De Gernier asked Leonora to dance with him, to which she readily consented.

Monsieur Duclós made the same request, in a more animated manner than Leonora had ever witnessed. She told him she was engaged for the early part of the dance, but would be happy to comply with his wish at the end; which was willingly accepted by Duclós.

Duclós thought that his early offer would have secured him first the hand of Leonora as a partner; but no, his friend had engaged her, and he now but too truly perceived that what he had augured had come to pass.

He pictured himself as the object of dislike, the victim of love, and the martyr of mortification. The lovely Leonora had stung his soul; he could no longer maintain his stoic firmness; her beauty softened his austerity, and he exchanged, for the morose and severe soldier-like aspect, the gay effeminacy and witty lightness of the Parisian beau. But still, nevertheless, nature betrayed the studied efforts of art, and he added to the emotions of fear those of disgust.

The hour was now come which summoned them to the duties of the light fantastic toe. The ball-room was already crowded, and everybody seemed struck with the enchanting beauty of Leonora. The artless simplicity of her dress, and undisguised openness of her countenance, added a double portion to her charms; whilst the envious looks that were glanced at De Gernier, who led her under his arm into the ball-room, were a pretty strong confirmation of those sensations, which were universally felt.

Having danced the two first dances, she complained of being indisposed, and declined dancing any more.

This hurt and astonished Monsieur Duclós, who now found that the shafts of all his studied politesse and assumed engaging manners were directed to the heart of a light and vain coquette.

He was quite disgusted with her conduct, and left the ball-room in a great hurry; casting, at the same time, a most significant glance at her, who was ignorant of his sensations on her account.

De Gernier was at a loss to unravel this mystery.

He saw Duclós leave the room in a violent agitation, without any ostensible reason; he ruminated on the subject for several minutes; and at last asked Leonora if she was able to explain his conduct, or give any satisfactory reasons why he left the rooms in such haste.

Leonora replied, that she observed him walk away in seeming agitation, but could not tell if he left the ball-room; or, even if he did, his reasons.

De Gernier no less than thought he had been insulted by somebody, which stirring up his resentful spirit, made him leave the rooms, for he was a man of the most delicate sense of honour, and could ill brook the insult or impertinent allusions of anybody.

The countess, who still bore the faded remains of former beauty, attracted also universal attention. All paid that accustomed homage of praise which her beauty, rank, and many accomplishments, so greatly merited. Her countenance and figure resembled the awful ruins of a magnificent building, more grand in decay.

With all her perfections, and accustomed as she was to the most distinguished marks of respect from all the nobility of Paris, she was not in the least vain or proud. The Parisian etiquette, and the formal order of the day, forced her to submit to its tyranny and oppression, or else her strong mind and pure sentiments would have taught her to contemn and despise the blandishments of court and the wily deceits of fashion.

The countess was a virtuous and good woman; she lived in happy exultation in the minds of the poor, and her society was constantly courted by the rich. She added to a witty and interesting conversation solid judgment and clear penetration; her discrimination was good and her remarks valuable; she was the very soul of bounty and of rectitude. She followed the simple and artless dictates of nature; and, in the midst of a dissipated city and depraved society, whilst others were floating down the stream of licentiousness, and entailing by their vices inevitable destruction on themselves and their families, she was spending her time in the cottages of the poor, examining into their affairs, and alleviating such as were in distress.

This was a charming woman; she not only laid down the rule to follow the path of happiness,

ness, but afforded an example herself; she not only endeavoured to mitigate the anguish of Leonora's mind, by mentioning the circumstances which would best tend to do it, but enforced them into action; and in laying down the rule by theory, she followed it by practice.

When Leonora and the rest of the party had retired from the rooms, and reached the mansion, the conversation turned on the subject of the ball.

The countess asked Leonora how she liked the ball-rooms, and how she was entertained; how she liked the Parisian belles, and what she thought of the beaux.

"I really, my dear aunt, was too tired to take any notice, and did not so much as know that Monsieur Duclôs had left the rooms till Monsieur de Gernier informed me that he had."

"I am astonished," resumed the countess. "What were his reasons for leaving the ball-room? Was he offended with any of the company, or did his favourite Dulcinea forsake him?"

"I apprehend," said Monsieur De Gernier, "that indisposition was his motive, for I observed that he looked very pale and languid all the evening."

"I am sorry if he is ill," replied the countess, "especially as I mean to have a water party to-morrow, and he may be too much indisposed to accompany us."

"I trust not," rejoined De Gernier; "I make no doubt he will be well enough in the morning to wait upon you."

The countess asked the worthy count, who had been staying up all the time in anxious expectation of their return, if he had seen Monsieur Duclôs.

He replied in the negative.

Supper being now finished, the family retired to repose, and soft slumbers locked up their senses in the cabinet of temporary forgetfulness.

CHAPTER III.

"He is the headstrong slave
Of passions unsubdued; he feels no tie
Of kindly love or blood—provoke him not,
Madec—it is nature's malady."—SOLTHEY.

WHEN Leonora gained her room, she bolted the door, and began to reflect on the mysterious conduct of Duclôs, which her delicate discrimination plainly told her was very strange.

She ruminated on the haste in which he left the rooms, and began to tax herself with various reasons, all of which she assigned as the causes of his departure. "Ah! foolish man," said Leonora, "can you be so dishonest, or so disingenuous, as to think that my refusal in dancing any more, had its origin from any other motives than reality? I find that the advice which my aunt has given me is unprofitably bestowed. If this be the dawn of the etiquette of Paris, if this be one of the formalities of fashion, may they ever be foreign to my mind! Fatigue was the cause of my declining further exertions, and Monsieur Duclôs interprets this into a sense of finesse on my part, to secure the hand of Monsieur de Gernier. How false—how ridiculous! all men are equally the same to me at present; and may I for ever defeat the suspicions of a coquette, which illiberal individuals may endeavour to bestow on my character. I find that my mind begins already to pant for its former retirement; where, secure from the prying eye of envy and malevolence, I should taste the same delights of unstudied nature. Ah! my sainted mother, amidst this vortex of dissipation, this scene of luxury, and this perpetual round of pleasure, I am in solitude! If left a moment to myself, the spirits of departed greatness are perpetually hovering round me, and gently chiding me for plunging so early into the gay scenes of the world."

"They rebuke me, and make me reflect on the dying moments of my dear mother. But am I, because I have lost the most affectionate of parents, to pass my time in sorrow and in tears? Experience has shown me that it is vain to mourn for your loss, and has taught me to suppress the expression of those sighs and lamentations which are so unprofitably bestowed on your sacred memory, which, as long as I exist, will ever be dear unto me. I will now endeavour to gain my accustomed spirits; and although the light and seductive manners of Paris may stimulate a young mind to indulge in daily excess of pleasure, and follow its votaries with unwearied assiduity, I will not incline to its maxims, but will learn so to regulate

the affections of my heart, that they will neither make me a prey to grief on the one hand, or the victim of dissipation on the other."

Leonora now began to contemplate the former part of her exclamation. She said that all men were indifferent to her; but those feelings were not realized, as the merits of De Gernier rose to her mind. "Am I wrong," said Leonora, "in exulting in his sincerity? Can evil arise from so noble and magnanimous a spirit? Impossible! His friendship warms every vein of my body. When I am in the pleasure of his conversation I forget my former troubles, and listen with rapture to his soft and elegant discourse."

She saw the contrast between him and Monsieur Duclôs. The one her mind taught her to admire, the other fear; the towering form of Duclôs, whenever it was opposed to her person, filled her mind with a secret terror. She shunned him as the weary traveller does the beast of the forest; and by paying him those compliments which the order of the day forced her to do, she hoped at least to show him that he had nothing to hope from her attention, or to fear from her indifference.

Her mind, wearied by the late scene, sunk into the arms of sleep; but so greatly did the strange conduct of Duclôs in the ball-room occupy her feelings, that she dreamt of him and the company.

The state of Duclôs's mind was also in the same agitation.

When he regained his room, he reflected on the extraordinary conduct of Leonora. "Why did she refuse my hand?" exclaimed the distracted man, in an agony of despair. "I thought that the country manner and antiquated air of this rustic would have been too much transported with the conquest which it had made to relinquish the prize; but I see that the great, the predominant evil assails equally all women; and the false gloss which polishes the manner of what they call this lovely, this enchanting Leonora, is nothing but the light and meretricious manner of the flirt and the coquette, which she exercises to please her admirers, and indulge her vanity. But no more: I will examine her actions in private; I will scrutinize each look, each gesture, and each glance of the eye; I will be severe in observing to whom they are directed and what sort of manner accompanies them; I may then determine the merits and demerits of this girl, who appears to me but in a strange light. Her aunt, the Countess de Santá, is an amiable woman, and may Leonora ever emulate her brightness and follow her example! I am happy in the intimacy of so respectable and worthy a friend; and I am afraid that the state of circumstances will soon estrange me, perhaps for ever, from her interesting society, as the fate of a soldier is at all times uncertain."

The approaching morning was appointed for the water party; and scarce had the morning tinged the skies with orient red, ere all the party were prepared for their aquatic excursion.

Leonora, De Gernier, and Madame Santá, were to occupy the first boat; the Count de Gras, Monsieur Le Fos, Madame Berton, and the remaining party the others.

The day was particularly favourable, and Leonora, who had never been on the water before, was vastly entertained; but every time they came against a rising wave, or were tossed to and fro by the foaming billows, her courage left her, and she discovered emotions of fear.

De Gernier pacified her, and told her not to apprehend the least danger; and under such guardian auspices she resigned her fears to the bubbles of the deep.

The countess, to whom a water party was no novelty, ridiculed the apprehensions of Leonora. She called her a coward, and told her that she would not do for a sailor's wife.

"That may be," rejoined Leonora, "but I think after a little experience you will not tax me with pusillanimity, and will cease to upbraid me for my childish fears."

"Well," replied the countess, "I am happy to hear you acknowledge your fears, and make no doubt, the next time we go on the water, that you will brave the dangers of the deep."

The party now stopped to take some refreshment, and the countess asked her friends how they were entertained.

They all assured her of their amusement and satisfaction.

The close of evening drawing on, warned them to repair to the mansion.

The Countess de Santá congratulated Monsieur Duclôs on his early and fortunate recovery, and expressed to him her sincerest sentiments of regret for his sudden indisposition, particularly at so critical a period.

Concealing in his own mind the real circumstances, he thanked her for her sympathizing solicitude, and told her that he was very sorry that he felt himself in such a state as forced him to quit the rooms.

The countess suspecting, however, the real state of the case, suffered the matter to drop without further conversation.

De Gernier and Duclôs informed their worthy hostess, that they could not have the pleasure of dining with her the next evening, as some friends requested their company on some important business.

Their real object in absenting themselves from the chateau was to attend some friends, or rather black-legs, in a party which they had made for that evening.

I must inform my readers that, morose and severe as Monsieur Duclôs appeared, and ready as he was to take notice of the weakness of mankind, he was nevertheless one of the first to discover it in himself, for he was inclined to one of the very worst affections of the heart, that fatal propensity gaming. Indeed so sanguine was his thirst after this dishonourable and ruinous vice, that by his artifice and cunning he had persuaded young De Gernier to sip and taste that cordial which was mixed for his ruin.

But De Gernier's mind was too strong to follow the principles of so worthless and abominable a vice.

He saw the drift of Duclôs, which, however, was not made for his own benefit, but merely to indulge his sanguine passion; for he did not exhort De Gernier to be his companion in that vice to make a purse for himself: no, far from it.

His principles were so hardened by gaming, that in vain did De Gernier's friendly advice operate on his mind, which, wedded to its own ignorance and folly, followed spontaneously its own dictates, and pursued a system that would ultimately crown his dishonourable exploits with misery, grief, remorse, and distress.

He asked his friend De Gerpier to accompany him if he did play.

His request was granted.

This evening seemed to determine his future fate.

They now arrived at the rooms, which were tolerably filled with people; the care-worn visage, the hopes and the fears which marked the traits of their countenances, strongly characterized them for what they followed.

Duclôs now seated himself with three companions from whom he had recently won considerable sums of money.

He now staked the enormous sum of one thousand Louis d'or, which, from the first course of the play, and the bend of the game, seemed to ensure him success, but an unlucky card made him lose the stake.

Duclôs, undaunted by this *trivial* loss, and whose mind was goaded on by the varying passions of hope and fear, ventured upon double the sum which he had just lost. His friend De Gernier was now concerned for his safety, and wished him to cease playing any more; but no, he would have his own way.

The deep tint of the carnation, but which was soon exchanged for the livid paleness of the lily, which marked the countenance of Duclôs, plainly discovered the emotions of his soul. He saw from the beginning that ruin attended him, yet hope brightened up his countenance, and trusting to the delusive goddess, he played deeply, and by the superior skill, wily artifice, and deep penetration of his antagonists, he fatally lost all which he had so imprudently staked.

Yet this did not stop his ruinous course, for he now mustered up all he had to the last shilling, and his robe was all he dared to claim as his own.

De Gernier was very sorry for him, but experience had taught him that it was in vain to direct good advice to the heart of him who was insensible to its value, and who spurned its tendency. He now saw the evil coming on which he had long anticipated. A few minutes would determine his fate; either ensure him success, or plunge him into the abyss of misery.

The haggard looks and distorted countenance of Monsieur Duclôs strongly exposed the feelings of his soul; his fears were visible, and his hands trembled at each card he played. He looked at the countenances of his companions, but they were stern and unchanged. He now saw that the theory of De Gernier's advice was rejected for the experience of evil; he wished

to fly from this infernal pandæmonium, but it was too late ; the money was staked, and eternal misery was hovering over each card he played, till at last that destruction of all earthly comfort, which his fears taught him long to anticipate, but which his hopes stimulated him to reject, was completed ; the last heavy stroke concluded his ruin, and closed the scene for ever from his eyes ; he was now a beggar, the sad victim of folly and iniquity ; he was destitute of every comfort in the world, an outcast from society, and exiled from every friend ; for those individuals who rally round the standard of prosperity, are the very first to leave us in adversity ; long may we wander among its wiles, and in vain may we call upon them for assistance, for their ears are deaf to our prayers. His senses are now awakened to a just sense of his situation ; his mind, which had long slumbered in vice, and every evil propensity, arose to a serious contemplation of his miserable and unpitied state.

He now saw the many disadvantages, innumerable inconveniences, troubles, cares, anxieties, and remorses, arising from profligacy and gambling. He had despised and refused to listen to the voice of reason ; his sanguine desire to satiate his infernal passion now reaped the harvest of its toils ; but what was it ? A beggar, a stranger to happiness, not a friend to sympathize with him in his sufferings, or to alleviate his distress.

" Why did I," exclaimed the unhappy man, half distracted by despair, " refuse to listen to the voice of my friend ? I have injured him by my folly ; I dare not look him in the face and say I repent, now the deed, ah ! the fatal deed, is indeed done. Can I seek comfort from him whom I have refused to obey, and whose friendly admonitions I have resolutely refused to follow ? No ; I must now endure the miseries which by my wretched conduct I have so sadly entailed on myself. The hour is now come when conscience will resume her throne, and view impartially the deeds of the soul. Oh ! what a terrible judgment it pronounces ! Oh earth, hide me from the light of the day ; its rays are terrible to me ; it imposes a dead silence on all around, which stifles the force of passion, and teaches the deluded mind to listen to the voice of nature and of truth. On what side shall I look for comfort ? Is it possible for language to defend, or ingenuity to palliate such crimes ? Of what avail is all the studied elegance of the Parisian court ? of what advantage is a gay and fashionable intercourse with the world, since it is productive of such misery and distress ? Accursed be the hour that ever seduced me from the path of virtue ! Accursed be the hour that ever I entered this voluptuous and dissipated city ! Before I plunged myself into this abyss of shame and misery, I was a stranger to the blandishments of seduction and the evil passions. How strong is temptation ! how alluring ! how seducing the gain of gaming ! Stung at first by my seeming good luck, I stopped not to examine into its eventual consequences, but foolishly thought that I could stop when I liked ; but experience, ah ! dire experience, has shown me how fatally I have been deceived. When first I entered this city, I only followed the dictates of nature ; I was generous from my soul, and sincerely loved my profession ; I never discovered any evil propensities, and, above all, any for the system of gaming, but the introduction which I got into its infernal parties alienated the affections of my heart, seduced my principles, and have entailed inevitable destruction and eternal misery on me. Is not this instance of the depravity of the world, its gross sensuality, seductive charms, and painful vicissitudes, sufficient to turn my brain ? But let me view more closely the state of my affairs. Oh ! merciful Father, what a hideous picture ! Reduced from the highest state of affluence and ease to indigence and want, experience will now, I trust, teach me how to appreciate those blessings which I have shamefully lavished away on the vanities of gaming, voluptuousness, and dissipation. I now find that I have not a penny in the world to meet its incumbent expenses, and shall most probably be ridiculed and despised by the evil agents of my misery."

De Gernier was truly afflicted for the heavy loss of his friend, whom he bore weeping under his arm from the tables. He endeavoured to console him as much as possible by suggesting those means which would the best tend to recruit his lost property. He advised him to relinquish that profession which by his reduced circumstances he was no longer able to follow with credit to himself, or satisfaction to the corps. He pointed out those means by which he would be the best able to procure support, which, added to the profits of his commission, would, if he left off his fatal vice, gaming, afford him a comfortable and decent subsistence.

Duché now but too sadly perceived the efficacy of De Gernier's suggestions, and he resolved to put them immediately into action. He determined to leave the army and retire to

some sequestered spot, where in silent sorrow he might muse on the past scenes of his life, and obtain relief from a sincere and contrite repentance.

The sad fatigues of his affairs had reached the chateau. The family were much concerned for his dreadful loss, and were equally surprised at the reasons which dictated it.

Duclos's mind was too much oppressed with grief to go and wish the family at Santé chateau adieu, previous to his departure; he sent his thanks to the countess for her liberal and hospitable conduct to him, and sincerely regretted that the most painful circumstances would for ever put a period to their intimacy.

He now bade a tender adieu to De Gernier, and flew from Paris, and also far from the reach of some of his creditors, he owned various bills which his sudden reverse of fortune would not suffer him to discharge previous to his departure.

De Gernier was sorry for Duclos, as he saw the friend whom he revered, and whom the whole society of officers esteemed, going into voluntary exile—far away from the miseries, vanities, and depravity of the world, to pass his time in sorrow and in prayer, and shun that creature man, by whom he had been ruined.

De Gernier asked Duclos if he could do anything for him previous to his sad departure.

The latter answered in the negative.

He assured De Gernier that often in his lonely and miserable walks he should think of him, and reflect with gratitude on his undeviating sincerity. He said that, when far distant from the voice of envy, dissipation, and luxury, when away from the whispers of malevolence, and secluded from the rude passions of the soul, he should often think on him, and bless him amongst the many which his circumstances taught him to weep for.

The next morning Duclos set off on his miserable journey, De Gernier having furnished him with some money to defray his expenses, as the last tribute of his esteem and affection.

De Gernier, despite of the many impediments which the character of Duclos offered against friendship, contracted a firm and faithful sincerity for him, which he ardently evinced to the last moment which he was with him.

Duclos's mind, despite of its frailties, was susceptible of the finest emotions; the latent spark of virtue was not wholly extinguished, but his intemperate sense for gaming extinguished the dying embers of all moral affections, and brought on that ruin which was portentous from his vices.

De Gernier had uniformly endeavoured to chasten his mind and correct his passions, but all his advice was unprofitably bestowed, although De Gernier was a good fellow from his heart, honest, candid, and upright, and would have done anything for his friend. He had been in various engagements with De Gernier, had travelled many miles with him, and always served him with the utmost integrity of principle.

It was the artifices of gay Paris that obscured the light of his reason; it was the sense of gain, and the growing thirst after gaming, that dimmed his eyes; he saw nothing, and ran with heedless unconcern headlong down a precipice of destruction.

De Gernier gave the family at Santé chateau an accurate account of the whole history of Duclos's life as he had remembered him, and also detailed with prolixity the whole of the circumstances of the evening which completed his ruin. They were all sorry for him, and also greatly surprised.

"How delusive," said the countess, "are the characters of men! how deceitful is their exterior appearance! from the morose aspect and reserved manners of Duclos, I should have thought him above the fatal indulgence of evil propensities; his mind appeared dignified and exalted, and wore the character of a man who held in utter contempt the weakness of nature. I find that the gloss which was cast over his actions was only to conceal his imperfections, human frailties, and faulty inclinations; it certainly did successfully conceal them from me, and I should have been the very last person in existence to have pronounced him a rake and a gambler."

"I am sorry, my dear madame," said the worthy Couat de Gras, "that your experience in life has here so notoriously failed you. I should have thought, singularly calculated as you are to examine the characters and dive into the hearts and thoughts of men, that you would have readily interpreted Monsieur Duclos's gloomy air and melancholy manner into a perpetual sense of musing on his losses, his weaknesses his follies, and his evil propensities;

roving as his mind was over the ocean of rude passions, and contriving and premeditating schemes for success in gaming, you might have soon perceived that his reserve and still manner were not the effect of a strong and dignified mind over the weaknesses of our nature, but a melancholy reflection on its vices, and contriving the best schemes of restoring his losses. I never liked him from the first day I saw him ; I laid him down for a bad character in my own mind : his manner was not natural, it was the effect of art, and the seeming triumph over a sense of misfortune ; his gloomy air was only to conceal the natural bent of his mind, and to draw in raw and inexperienced youths, who, flattered by his seeming steady attention and quiet manner, considered him in the light of an able and just observer of mankind. How false ! how absurd ! He put me in mind of an experienced black-leg in search of his prey ; his morose countenance, stern look, and surly manner, characterised him as the subject of my fears, and the more I saw of him the more I was induced to believe that my opinions of him were well grounded."

The whole party rather inclined to the sentiments of the count, but discovered at the same time the most unfeigned expressions of sorrow and regret for the dreadful judgment imposed upon him.

Weeks passed weeks, till the time which the count had proposed to stay was nearly expired.

Leonora was dejected at the thoughts of returning home, but willingly obeyed the wishes of her father.

Their time was passed in the same monotonous order of pleasure and satisfaction, nothing of any importance occurring, save that the esteem which Leonora had entertained for De Gernier, and which was indeed rather encouraged by the count, increased daily and soon grew up into a tender passion, and produced emotions in her breast which she had hitherto been a stranger to.

The effect of her growing love was fully exemplified in an interview which she had with De Gernier previous to her departure. She was induced to take a walk one evening, it being very mild, clear, and beautiful. The sky was spangled with countless myriads of stars ; the sun had long sunk into the lower world, its shadow lengthening as it was drawn over the surface of the earth ; the mountain tops were tinged with a golden ray, which still lingering on their towering summits, diffused a soft radiant hue on all around. The moon was just ascending above the horizon in cloudless majesty ; all nature seemed to repose ; a solemn stillness involved the face of things, and the finest emotions of the soul were awakened to a serious and awful contemplation of the sacred author of our existence.

She cast her eyes to the city of Paris and the river Seine, the majestic appearance of which filled her mind with the most pleasing ideas.

She thought on De Gernier, and wished to see him, yet the modest blush which suffused her cheek stifled her desire, but so propitious were adventitious circumstances, that after turning her eyes round she saw De Gernier approaching her in a quick and hurried pace.

" I am afraid, my dear Leonora, that you will catch cold ; I think you are rather imprudent in staying out so late." Leonora said she hoped not, but really the lovely and enchanting appearance of the sleeping world induced her to take a walk, and prolong it more than she had first intended. She said that she took infinite delight in the contemplation of so sublime and heavenly a scene.

The face of nature was now beautifully soft, the bright orb of night shining in tranquil glory in the blue ether, above and throwing a dubious shade on the dark underwood of oak and birch beneath, concluded a scene of infinite majesty and grandeur.

Leonora and De Gernier were transported by such exquisite delights.

The solitary grandeur of the objects that immediately surrounded them, the mountain region towering above the magnificent structure of the ancient chateau, the venerable avenue of trees, the stately aspect of the larches, which waved their heads mournfully over the forest tops, conveyed to their minds the most pleasing and tranquil emotions.

" I am happy," said De Gernier, " that the natural turn of my feelings is congenial with yours ; I have discovered a uniform monotony of sentiment in our minds, our ideas are the same, and I cannot refrain from assuring you how tenderly I love and adore you.

" Honourable as your esteem is," rejoined Leonora, " and sensible as I am of your kindness and attention, the state of our family affairs is such as precludes me from making that frank-

ness which, if words do not sufficiently convey to you, in vain do my stifled emotions conceal."

"I well know, my dear Leonora, the state of your mind, and shall cease to harass you by proposing those things which are as yet far distant; it is my business to comfort and support, rather than distress you, and the time may come when our mutual attachment will be crowned with the joys it so justly merits; and I am happy your kind father has given me permission to correspond with you, and visit him at his villa, which I shall certainly do as early as possible."

"I am happy," replied Leonora, "that we shall have the pleasure of your company, although our humble cottage greatly differs from our former mansion. Ah! would I were there! we should then be able to entertain you in a suitable manner, and I should be able to favour and countenance that attention which, from the present critical situation of our affairs, is so uselessly bestowed on me."

"Do not distress yourself, my dear Leonora, most adorable virgin! consider me as your brother, and repose on my confidence the secrets of your heart, and rest assured that you may always rely on my integrity."

"That I have done," resumed our heroine; "I have relied on your fidelity with the assurance of a sister, and shall uniformly and implicitly rest on your sincerity."

"May you ever find me worthy of that trust," replied De Gernier.

The damps of night beginning to fall, induced our youthful couple to gain the mansion, where they found all the party in good spirits, and anxiously waiting their return from walking.

A Madame Vanlevier was drinking tea with the countess. She was a very agreeable and interesting woman; the hand of time had touched her features, and without impairing her faculties, had only added a dignity and superiority to her person, which her youth had left unfinished.

She was very much struck with the modesty and simplicity of Leonora, who had looked that evening particularly well.

Perhaps it was the tender declaration of De Gernier which, consoled her, and heated her youthful imagination, perceiving nevertheless that many disadvantages would attend their union; but these she concealed to herself. The soft manner, impassioned address, tender feelings, and honourable integrity of De Gernier were foremost in her thoughts. She was constantly thinking of him, and praising in her mind his many distinguished qualities.

The count and Leonora were to quit the chateau and the agreeable society of the Countess de Santá the next morning. She was sorry and reluctant in returning to the scenes of her former misery and distress.

But still she felt happy in her own mind in revisiting the cottage where she had experienced such genuine affliction.

She wished to put her fortitude to the strength of trial, and see how absence had operated on her mind. She resolved to meet the cottage, and all its appendages, without a tear; yet when reflection stirred up in her mind the past events, a sigh escaped her—the true and grateful tribute of a feeling heart.

Having informed De Gernier of her departure, she wished him good night, and resigned her weary eye-lids to the poppy influence of Morpheus, who veiled in a temporary oblivion all her past woes.

CHAPTER IV.

— "Your father!
Oh! unfold this impenetrable mystery,
And ease my heart of its deadly sorrow!"

HAVING arranged all for her journey, she obeyed the summons of her father. They wished the countess adieu, who promised to visit them the first opportunity.

Leonora's departure from De Gernier was affecting, but he comforted her by telling her that it would not be long before he saw her again. This consolation had its desired effect, and she released herself from his embrace, suffering a tear to twinkle in her eyes as she stepped into the carriage, which now driving up the long walk, was soon out of sight.

The harvest was nearly completed; the matured aspect of the country, the husbandmen getting in their friendly seeds, the autumnal tint that began to mark the face of nature with a

varied hue, filled the mind of Leonora with inexpressible delight. She paused, and examined with rapture the village of St M——, which was situated near the river Seine! The romantic scenery around, the neat aspect of the rustic village, and the majestic windings of the river, which followed its serpentine direction through verdant meads, lulled the soul into placid melancholy.

The count was highly gratified with the charming view, and took infinite pleasure in viewing the fine sensibility, quick penetration, and active mind of his daughter.

They arrived at the cottage after a most delightful journey, which looked more beautiful than ever; perhaps absence had increased its charms, but they were melancholy ones. The sad and solitary tranquillity of the objects that immediately surrounded her, the deep repose of the scene, save where the river dashed its waves along the margin, heightened her tender feelings to a sense of the most exquisite reflection.

Her mind was able to meet these objects of sad sorrow without a tear, although each little circumstance, each walk, and the well-known arbour where she was wont to spend many hours with her dear mother, in agonizing succession brought up the past endearments of life. The idea of her sainted parent pressed closely on her imagination, but she indulged in the thought with becoming fortitude.

The count was visibly dejected, yet his manly air taught him to suppress his rising sorrow.

The grandeur of the wide horizon, the stillness of nature, its ripened beauties, and its matured aspect, gradually elevated the ideas of Leonora to that sublime contemplation of the author of all the beauties which she saw, and also to the reflection of her past affliction. She looked anxiously on all around, which seemed to alleviate her sorrow, but she often paused as memory awakened the pang of affection, which was wont to dart its grief-venomous arrows on her soul. Yet her christian fortitude triumphed over all her misfortunes, and she regarded the awful dispensation of Providence with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction, since she resigned her dear mother in pure and holy faith, and in certain hopes of a better life.

The count, taking hold of her arm, took a little walk with her round the shrubbery. The first subject of his conversation was that of De Gernier.

Leonora trembled lest her father should mention anything that would put a period to their growing affection; but her mind was happily released from a portion of fear and suspense, for her father informed her that he was happy to see their growing intimacy and attachment. But he told her at the same time not to encourage for the present any ideas of union, as the state of his affairs would not admit of it; but consoled her by telling her that he hoped the time would ultimately arrive which would remove all obstacles, and crown her happiness. The count concluded by saying, "With regard to Monsieur de Gernier, I have examined his character in all lights, and am impressed with the highest opinion of his virtues. I have a great esteem for him, and should circumstances shine prosperously on us, I should exult in the inward pleasure and satisfaction of having so worthy and so honourable a son-in-law.

This was a sweet soothing balm to Leonora's mind, as, from the solemn and dignified manner of her father, she anticipated evil to her youthful imagination; but was transported beyond measure to find that he entertained so favourable an opinion of De Gernier's merits."

Leonora reflected on the melancholy ejaculations which she frequently heard her father pouring out in the most impassioned tone of voice. His heavenly countenance bore the aspect of a spirit injured by misfortunes, but resigned to its fate by religion. "Oh! my sister! my long-lost sister!" frequently escaped his lips.

Leonora not having heard anything concerning any other aunt, was at a loss to conjecture who his sister could be; and the character of sorrow which marked the expressions of the count made the mystery still more palpable. Wild and incoherent as was the subject of his solitary exclamations, yet still, nevertheless, she seemed to apply the most marvellous parts of it to the strange accounts which had been told by the old porter, Carle, of the family affairs.

Delicacy forbade her to tax her father with inquisitive suspicions, or to pry into the subject any more; and she resigned herself in peaceful acquiescence to the many mysteries which seemed to attend the family, trusting at the same time that patience and submission would finally elucidate them.

The count's sudden departure from the chateau, and his distressed state of mind on this occasion, filled her mind with increased anxiety and suspense. She wished and longed to

knew the reasons that dictated this seeming inexplicable circumstance, but was at a loss to give any. Her innocent mind, unskilled in the depths of intrigue, and unaccustomed in the ways of cunning, was but ill calculated to solve so difficult a problem.

Her mind resembled the troubled ocean, for she suffered her loose and disjointed ideas to float unregarded on its surface. Her confused brain and disturbed imagination had no pilot to steer their course. The count's abrupt departure from the family mansion, the death of her mother, the absence of her brother, the mysterious ejaculations of her father, and her esteem for the amiable De Gernier, alternately occupied her attention. She pictured an immense multitude of evils surrounding her on all sides, yet she peacefully resigned herself to her fate.

Their time was passed at the cottage as pleasantly and cheerfully as could be expected. Nothing of any consequence occurred for some time, save the receipt of a letter, which rather agitated him at first.

He was at breakfast when it arrived. He eagerly broke the seal, being at a loss to conjecture from whom it came. He gazed on the superscription, being still in visible doubt of its author, but was soon relieved from his anxiety, when in looking at the termination of the epistle, he discovered the name of De Gernier subscribed.

The contents of the epistle were thus:

"Monsieur Pierre de Gernier to the Count de Gras"

"DEAR SIR,—I now venture to trespass on your time with these few lines, which flow from the heart of your most sincere and well-wisher. The peculiar instance of kindness which you have discovered towards me in asking me to your chateau, induces me to take advantage of this inviting opportunity to assure you how readily and thankfully I embrace this occasion of availing myself of that hospitality which you have so liberally and openly offered me. I propose, should it not be inconvenient, to do myself the honour of waiting on you to-morrow; and am happy at the same time in informing you that the orders of our regiment for service are counteracted. They will consequently remain at Paris, which will give me more opportunity and advantage in indulging in the charming and interesting society of my dear Leonora. I trust that you will give her my best wishes, and assure her that my esteem is not in the least abated, and though absent from her, she lives in my breast, and I exist but for her rapturous society.

"Yours faithfully,

"PIERRE DE GERNIER."

The count gave the letter to Leonora, who expressed great satisfaction at the intended visit of De Gernier. Her father's innuendo of the other evening pressed closely on her mind, and she doubted not but the sincerity of De Gernier would triumph over the mean practices of delusive intrigue; she did not fear to lay open her mind to him, and acquaint him with every individual circumstance of the family.

He will then, thought Leonora, be better able to judge for himself, and discriminate between the duties (for a time) of love and sincerity.

The count and Leonora had not passed many hours ere the generous hero arrived.

The count received him hospitably, as did also our heroine, and with marks of the most unfeigned pleasure.

"How do you do, my dear sir?" said De Gernier; "it gives me most heartfelt satisfaction that it will be in my power to indulge more largely in the joys of your society, as being quartered at Paris, and not having anything particular to do, I shall be at all times able to wait upon you."

"I am glad that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you so often," said the count; "but the many inconveniences you will be forced to accommodate yourself to force me to apologize for their existence. But as you may be probably soon acquainted with the causes that dictate them, I make no doubt you will readily put up with them."

"Most certainly, most honourable sir," rejoined De Gernier; "the pleasures of your society, and unfeigned delight I take in it, are causes which alone would always induce me (indeed the only ones) assiduously to court that society which I have found so sincere, hospitable, and benevolent."

The party now retired to the sitting-room, and De Gernier amused them by detailing all

the circumstances that had happened at Paris since their departure; he also told them that the Countess De Santá desired her best love, and was in good health and spirits the last time he left her.

Their hours rolled in pleasing chit-chat from dinner to supper, till at length the hour of midnight warned them for repose.

De Gernier wishing the count and Leonora good night, retired to the room which was appointed for him.

The count had proposed to De Gernier, should the weather prove favourable, to go out shooting the next morning, as the country around abounded with an astonishing profusion of all sorts of game.

De Gernier arose early the next morning, and was joined by the count, who, being both flushed with eager hopes of success, set out on their sporting excursion.

The count was wont to be a famous shot in the field, but by some misfortune did not distinguish himself, whilst his youthful companion was the undisputed hero of the day. With a gladdened heart he brought the triumphs of his sport to Leonora, who viewed the victims of his success with a kind of sympathizing complacency. She was glad that her lover had met with such good success, but still was sorry for the lives of the innocent creatures that were sacrificed for his sport. This kind of feminine commiseration, which was ridiculous in the ears of the stern sportsman, De Gernier soon defeated. He told Leonora that the momentary death which was inflicted on them, did not allow them time to be sensible of pain.

"But should they be wounded, poor creatures," rejoined Leonora, "would they not then groan under the most excruciating tortures? And should they in that case escape from you, would they not languish in all the pains of an expiring existence?"

"So far," replied our hero, "you are the most able reasoner; but it is the object, the grand, the distinguishing object, of the sportsman to make so sure of his game as to kill it instantaneously; not but what it may sometimes be wounded, and escape from him in torture."

"Well," replied Leonora, "so far you may be in the right; but, to conclude, I well know how to appreciate the humanity of country sportsmen, and think it useless for a woman to offer her weak arguments, however good may be the tendency of them, to persuade the keen sportsman from the cruelty of his pleasures. I have argued with many on the same subject, and find that you, amongst many others, maintain the same pertinacious opinions."

"I have all this time listened," rejoined De Gernier, "to your persuasive eloquence, which I cannot but own, my dear Leonora, has quite unmanned me. I submit to your humane and well-founded arguments, and cordially own that you have gained a complete victory. May you preach up the same good doctrine to the rest of our firm and unbending sportsmen, and I am sure that you would indisputably convert them."

"I thank you for your compliments, De Gernier, and am glad to see that your rigour is a little softened."

The worthy count, who had been a calm spectator of this warm contest, was sorry to see victory declared in favour of his daughter, for he was truly of De Gernier's sentiments; he followed up his game with a keen spirit, but humane discrimination.

Their early rising and laborious toils awakened in them a very proper sense of appetite, being both heartily ready for dinner.

De Gernier passed a month at the cottage, during which time he spent his days in hunting and shooting with the count, and in walks and interviews with Leonora, which served to strengthen his love and her confidence.

When he talked to her, it was not of love, but of his family affairs, and reposed in her breast the secrets of his heart with as much confidence as if she had been his sister; she considered him in no other light than that of a brother.

It was highly gratifying to the count to see the attachment of these lovers growing every day, and ripening like the abundant harvest, yet he regretted the many obstacles that precluded their union. The unsettled state of his affairs, his utter ignorance of De Gernier's family, and various other circumstances, deprived him of the satisfaction of our hero's wishes, who was nevertheless too honourable and ingenuous to press the matter any further, and take advantage of the count's desultory concerns.

De Gernier, who had long wished to have a private interview with the count, had his anxious desire satisfied ; for one morning the count desiring to speak a few words with him, requested him to step into his study, as he had something important to consult him about.

De Gernier willingly and gladly followed him into an adjoining room.

The count began his conversation thus —

" It gives me material pleasure to witness your growing affection for Leonora, and I cannot but take advantage of this opportunity to represent the many difficulties attending the consummation of that attachment which you have so strongly discovered for my daughter. The critical situation of her fortune, my total ignorance of your family, and distressed state of my affairs, put a forcible barrier to your union. Yet believe me, my dear sir, that no obstacle shall surmount that happiness which your virtues and fidelity to us justify you to expect, if I can ward them off ; yet they are of such magnitude, that I fear our united efforts are too feeble to annihilate them. You have been eye-witness of our present state of living, my depressed spirits, and the melancholy of Leonora ; and I presume that you are not utterly ignorant of the causes which have induced me to take up my abode in this lonely and dreary spot. I am now then going to rely implicitly on your confidence : I have tried the strength of your sincerity, which merits my warmest approbation. I think that the integrity and spirit of your principles will stimulate you to avenge my wrongs, and obtain for me that redress which nature and the common laws of justice so loudly call for. I have been injured beyond redress ; and it appears that no fortune, however ample—no title, however illustrious—no interest, however great, flattering, and popular, have been able to guard me against the storms of superior favour, and the cruelty of power."

" You may rest assured, most honoured sir, that I will do my utmost to secure your happiness ; and whatever you confide in me, however trivial and of slight importance it may be, you may rely on me that I will execute it with a sincere fidelity."

" Know, then, that the Marquis de Saint Puffet having got possession of the title-deeds of my estate, has illegally secured it. The manner in which the title-deeds were obtained is as follows :—

" A gentleman, who called himself a Monsieur l'Oiseau, became intimately acquainted with my sister (who then resided with me in the chateau), and paid his addresses to her, which I resolved to stop immediately, and for which purpose I begged him to discontinue his visits to her, as I could never consent to his union with her. But my interference was in vain, for so great was their mutual attachment, that he carried her away clandestinely in the dead of the night, and with him all the deeds belonging to the chateau. I apprehend that he gained them from my sister, who had them locked up in her drawer, as, having occasion one day to alter them, they were left in her room ; and who, I suppose, in the hurry of packing up, put them with those things which she could immediately carry away with her, by which means Monsieur l'Oiseau became possessed of them. He soon discovered that they were the title-deeds of the estate, and resolved at first to return them ; but thinking that it might lead to their discovery, he carried them in his breast, resolving that death should not sever them from him. But as he was travelling through a forest, he unfortunately dropped them all, and did not miss them till it was too late to find them again. The Marquis de Saint Puffet travelling that road, and his valet perceiving the packet of papers, pointed it out to him, who immediately took them up, and having examined their contents, seized my chateau on their claim, and drove me unprotected to seek shelter in the wide world. My feelings on this iniquitous circumstance may be more easily imagined than described.

" It is now twenty-two years since my sister has left me, during which time I have known no peace. I thought that the long time I remained unmolested at my chateau, after her elopement, would have authorized me to expect security : but no, the scene is reversed ; robbed of my property and my sister, an outcast from society, and the subject of misery, I am spending my time in the melancholy sorrow which you must have lately witnessed. This Marquis de Saint Puffet is the colonel of Henry's regiment. I gained this information from my son, who obtained it from one of the marquis's slaves.

" I am now, dear sir, considering what measures will be best to adopt in regaining my lost property, and at the same time anxious to become acquainted with the leading particulars of your birth and parentage, as I make no doubt I shall some time forward call you by the name

of son. But I find that the taper of life begins to wane ; I am feeble in body and dejected in spirits, and I can scarcely maintain so great oppression."

" It gives me heartfelt sorrow," replied De Gernier, " to perceive that your circumstances are so distressed, and that I am forced to communicate something to you that is both strange and surprising. This very same Marquis de Saint Puffet expelled me from the regiment which your son is in for my interference concerning that same estate, a place which I was always anxious to see, but could never find an opportunity. This Marquis de Saint Puffet sent me some military papers to sign, amongst which was an old decayed manuscript, which I perfectly remember to have been the hand-writing of my father."

" Of your father !" exclaimed the count, who was thunderstruck at the word father.

" Have patience, good sir ; I would not agitate your spirits at first by breaking out into a violent and uncouth exclamation, and have calmed my mind as much as possible ; but if you will have patience I will explain a mystery to you, which in its nature is most marvellous and satisfactory."

The count was astonished beyond measure at the strange conversation of De Gernier, but begged he would proceed, and assured him that he would bear all with fortitude, and would calm his feelings as much as he possibly could.

" I shall then, my dear count, enter into an elaborate detail of the history of my life, and at the conclusion shall show you that token which will prove to you the veracity of my assertions.

The History of Monsieur L'Oiseau, alias De Gernier.

" The earliest period that I can remember of my life is of our cottage in a small village in the south of France. I perfectly remember my mother, whom I have every reason to suppose is gone to the mansions of the just. My father diffused from my earliest infancy a martial spirit in my mind, as he was sanguine in his wishes for me to follow the profession of arms, and daily instructed me in that part of the science which would best tend to promote his wishes. He most amply succeeded ; for at the age of twelve years I imbibed such a glowing spirit for a military life, that nothing could resist the impetuosity of my request. My father appeared more sanguine than ever in the cause, and promised to obtain a commission for me in the king's service at the age of fifteen. My mind, bent on so glorious and honourable a life, discovered on all occasions the finest sallies of the soul. I was quick to feel, and assumed perhaps too great a degree of courage. My mother, whom I have the strongest reasons to suspect did not like the intended plan of life which my father had suggested, anxiously interrogated me concerning the army, trying at the same time, I am persuaded, to discover if the glowing and ardent spirit I at all times evinced proceeded from a true and virtuous sense in the cause ; but finding that I answered all her questions with avidity, and pleasure, she readily acquiesced with my request of following a military life. I was constantly reading of the signal exploits of famed heroes, and ever musing on the accounts of battles, till my ideas were so flushed with martial glory, that I began to condemn my age, or the inactivity of my father. He kindly remonstrated, and told me that I was yet too young and weak in my mind to resist the many temptations that would surround me on all sides. I resigned with patience to his parental expostulation, passing my time in a serious application to the various parts of that profession which I hoped would be some time called into action ; fondly hoping, at the same time, that I should evince by practice what I gained in my youth by theory.

" The year at which I completed my fifteenth year at length arrived. Never shall I forget my hopes and fears, which were then all exposed in a profession alone indebted to the system of privation and annoyance. My father purchased my commission, and having obtained so honourable a post, it only remained for me to fulfil my duties as a soldier and a son with credit to myself and honour to the family. The day soon arrived which was to convey me to the scenes of my future destiny. The evening before I departed, my father requested a few minutes conversation with me ; and never shall I forget the language which he used, or the affection he testified. He gave me some tender advice, which, thank God, I have always followed. He also gave me a portrait of my mother, and the certificate of her marriage ; he told me never to change the name of De Gernier, and always to respect it. He said, that should events turn out as adventitious circumstances might direct them, to remember the portrait and the certificate of the marriage."

Here the count shed a profusion of tears; but stolid his anguish as much as he could, begged De Gernier to proceed.

" 'Perhaps,' said he, 'they may be of material advantage to you hereafter.' He told me upon the honour of the family never to break the seal of the papers till circumstances should force me, which I have never done for these last seven years; the seal remains unbroken to this very day. I received these tokens of affection from my father with heartfelt pleasure, but it was mixed with grief; for the grave and solemn manner which accompanied the tones of his voice whilst he spoke to me, made me seriously reflect on the occasion; but my youthful imagination and glowing spirit soon prompted me to shake off the more mature considerations of age; and concluding that some family reasons forbade him to disclose the history of the papers, I put them into my waistcoat, placing them next to my breast, without once suffering them to disturb my mind. He told me to write to him often, to avoid bad company, and consult him in all straits and difficulties, as a father's advice is more valuable than the most fervent and enthusiastic dictates of friendship, which are frequently first employed to beguile the senses and then to ruin the happiness. My mother was deeply affected at my approaching departure, and shed a copious profusion of tears. When she reflected on the life I was going to lead, estranged from home, the subject of peril and misfortune, she did not know which to picture in the worst light, the horrors of any profession, or my absence from her society. My mother added to a sweet benignity of temper the most graceful and unaffected manners; her mind shone in as conspicuous a light as did her charity and accomplishments. She was a virtuous, good, and affectionate wife; venerated by the poor, esteemed by her equals, and, admired by the rich."

Here the count was visibly contending with struggling passions in his breast, but did not, interrupt De Gernier.

" My father was equally liked: he was a quiet, virtuous, and reserved man of firm principles and rigid integrity; his mind, though tainted by the philosophy of the age, partook of a happy mixture of dignity and mildness. He was clear and well informed, read a great deal, and observed much; was fond of history, and delighted in chemistry; but his natural turn of mind was for the army, although he was no soldier himself, but was nevertheless perfectly acquainted with the whole of military tactics in the most subtle points. The morning now arrived which was fixed for my departure; and after wishing my father and mother an affectionate adieu, I set out to join the dépôt of my regiment, which was stationed at Lyons. I had not been there long before I was ordered on service, during which period I became intimately acquainted with Monsieur Duclôs, the young man who met with such misfortunes at Paris, and whom I introduced to you the first time I had the pleasure of meeting you at Santé chateau. I had not been long on service before I had manifold occasions of distinguishing myself, which I did conspicuously on many occasions, and obtained the credit and praise of the regiment, and the whole society of officers. I wrote frequently to my father and mother, but only heard from them once. I apprehend that the considerable time which elapsed before they could receive my letters, and the time which intervened before I could get their answers, were the causes of their delay. Six months having escaped with no reply, awakened me to a serious consideration on the strange circumstances which dictated their procrastination, which was truly alarming. The critical situation in which I was placed precluded the possibility of obtaining leave of absence, or gaining any information concerning the melancholy causes of my father's silence. A whole year passed in the same monotonous uniformity of horror and despair. I gave myself up as lost to my family, and cursed the hour that ever induced me to follow the profession of arms; but still a slight ray of consolation gleamed on my wearied soul. I reflected on the possibility of miscarriage, and the loss of his letters, the distance from our head-quarters to the village in which my father resided being very considerable; but no letter appearing, I then gave myself up as lost for ever to my family, and them to me. I passed my time in the most exquisite torments of grief and despair. Another year followed in this dreary and uneventful manner; not a ray of hope brightened up my darkened countenance; all my efforts to trace any knowledge of my family were fruitless; I did not succeed in one. I was astonished, hurt, and mortified beyond measure; languishing in painful anxiety, and harassed by all the corroding cares of my profession; backbent with its toils, and disgusted with its incentives to vice. I peered after the grateful shade of

solitude, where I might pass my time in friendly misery, and obtain comfort in the midst of melancholy retirement. No prospect appeared to alleviate my distress; in a strange country, destitute almost of provisions, and exiled from every friend, I gave myself up to the most painful ideas; the most grating reflections racked my brain, whilst the daily toil and arduous difficulties of my station materially contributed to waste and consume my constitution. My health was getting very indifferent; I had not a person to assist me, save the generous Duclos, who proved himself to be a most warm, faithful, and sincere friend. The only cause which in some measure tended to compensate for such accumulated distress, was the rapid promotion I obtained. Having been wounded in several battles and secured a pension, I got permission to quit the service. I had acquired a comfortable support from the profits of my commission; which, added to my yearly stipend, enabled me to live in an independent manner. Having waded through the thickest of my difficulties, I resolved to trace my father if I possibly could. I must inform you that it was during this period of affliction that I was expelled from the Marquis de Saint Puffet's regiment, without any friend to apply to, to assist me in seeking for redress. After my unjustifiable expulsion, which was of that nature as did not preclude me from entering into another regiment, I re-entered the service. I immediately set off for our cottage, and on my arriving there I found it inhabited by strangers, and that the name of my dear father was almost unknown to them. You may, my dear count, more easily imagine than I can describe my feelings on this mournful occasion. Never shall I forget the horrors of the moment! I fainted in the arms of the unknown servant, and only recovered to fresh scenes of misery and grief. I found out that it was impossible to gain any information either of my father or mother. I therefore gave them up as lost to me in this temporary scene of misery and pain. I daily prayed for their health, if in this world, and for the consummation of their happiness if in the next; which, from the exemplary lives they both led, I have reason to anticipate."

The count became so violently oppressed by his feelings as to be totally incapable of listening any more to the narration of De Gernier; he retired to his study, begging him to continue his history the next day, which he promised faithfully to do.

Leonora eagerly asked him why his countenance looked so changed, and also if anything alledged him.

Tears supplanted the place of words; and he rushed into the arms of his daughter, and there sighed those feelings which were far too sorrowful for him to express.

Leonora, who was astonished at the distressing change of her father, wished very much to know the reasons that dictated his unaccountable manner; but finding all methods of success fruitless, she resigned herself to this amongst the many mysteries which seemed already to threaten the peace of the family.

The count being now more composed, Leonora left him to his silent reflections, but to a mournful and unpleasing retrospection of past events.

The interview between him and De Gernier seemed to explain the whole of the latter's family; and he was in a dreadful state of anxiety to know the latter part, which he anticipated would be so satisfactory, and a balm to every wound.

A gleam of joy shot across his weary mind as he contemplated the strength of De Gernier's power, which would produce those memorials of justice which had been so long stolen from him, and which would enable him to regain his lost property. His heart overflowed with gratitude when he reflected on his filial, ingenuous, and praiseworthy conduct. The strength of mind he discovered in his trial of life greatly pleased the count; he gloried in finding so illustrious a progeny, and delighted in the knowledge of his affairs which had so long been concealed from him; and from the gloomy contemplation of the elopement of his sister, he broke out into the following rapturous exclamation:—

"At length shall the hand of justice punish the evil authors of wickedness! at length shall their iniquitous plots be discovered and laid open! for though the vicious may sometimes pour affliction upon the virtuous, they will have bitterly to deplore the fruits of their short-lived triumph; for the time will come when the transient sunshine, which dazzled on their wicked works, shall set to their shame and discredit. That punishment which long awaited them, and constantly hovered over the scenes of their baseness, shall be discharged on them

with redoubled vengeance ; for the just and good man shall rise in power to annihilate the evil demon of his peace."

His imagination was now riveted on the subject of the Marquis de Saint Puffet. His interview with De Gernier fully evinced to him the baseness of the marquis's claim, and the unjustice of his conduct. The remaining part of the title deeds, added to the testimony of the faithful De Gernier, were sufficient to counteract the vain pretensions of the marquis, and he resolved to dispossess him as early as possible ; and though his fame and popularity were now extinguished, he determined to stir up the minds of the well-disposed to a just sense of his situation, and to countenance those measures which he resolved to use to defeat his bitter foe.

The field in which he had to combat was wide, but he was well armed ; and, trusting to the veracity of the communication of De Gernier, he doubted not that a very short time would reinstate him in that property which proud oppression and cruel dishonesty had so shamefully deprived him of.

Leonora having retired to her room, passed her time in a serious contemplation on the mysterious manner of her father. She wondered to witness such a dejection of spirits in him, which were wont to be so unusually light, considering the magnitude of his troubles, and how extensively they must contribute to damp his feelings and wound his peace.

The count had during his late distress uniformly discovered an undaunted mind in the hour of affliction. He was intrepid in the season of calamity, undismayed at the insolence of power, and unappalled even when his last home was wrested from him.

" Oh ! could I," exclaimed Leonora, " dive into the depths of futurity, how happy should I be. What a maze of wonder obscures my eyes, and dims the light of my reason. Surely fresh troubles, more accumulated than ever, have fallen upon my worthy parent ; and he, poor man, overwhelmed by their pressure, gives vent to those feelings which he cannot control. I have eyed his actions ; in vain does he struggle with the contending passions in his breast ; they are too much for him ; his natural weakness defies the power of conquering them. What a striking instance of Christian fortitude and manly resignation does the exemplary life of my honoured parent afford ; who, poor man, bears himself up to the last moment against the frowns of adversity and the storms of fate.

" How praiseworthy is patience, how honourable is forgiveness ! He, instead of inventing means to glut his revenge on the wicked authors of his misery, pardons their gross faults, and pities their weakness. Instead of mingling their curse with his prayers, he offers up the most fervent ejaculations for their forgiveness. He wishes not to revenge, but to rectify ; revenge dwells in little minds ; a noble and virtuous spirit is for ever its superior. He wishes to enlighten the benighted and infatuated minds of his enemies ; who, blinded by avarice, and goaded on by the mean sting of lucre to commit the most iniquitous actions, are deaf to the voice of reason. Multiplied as is the scene of the marquis's vice, and unexampled as is his baseness, he has my father's free pardon. Ah, too good, too charitable mortal ! How insensible, how petrified, and infatuated is the mind of him who will not acknowledge such illustrious virtue, such distinguished merit ! May I ever follow the brightness of my father's example ! may it ever be the guardian of my principles and actions ! How many inexplicable and strange events have taken place in our family ! When will the sum of our misery be completed ? Oh merciful Father ! have pity on the weakness and frailty of my sex, and forgive me for thus repining at the divine dispensations of thy almighty providence. Pardon me if any expressions of murmur or discontent escape my lips for those of praise and thanksgiving. The trial of my strength in this lonely pilgrimage has been tempting. Oh ! may I now implore your beneficent aid to invigorate me with sufficient strength to withstand the power and oppression which threatens me with destruction. Oh ! grant me an asylum in the tempest of affliction ; and forgive me if I suffer it to weigh me down, and prey upon my spirits. I will now try to compose my spirits as much as I can ; and will resign myself in quiet submission to those evils which will, I trust eventually vanish, leaving the substance instead of the phantom of happiness."

CHAPTER V.

"Night now was closing in; a man approached."

"Through every fibre of her trembling frame."—SOUTHEY.

Leonora passed her time in the same mournful silence and sad ejaculations. She wondered at the conduct of her father; and the more she asked him concerning the emotions he betrayed in the morning, the more it affected him, and also instigated her to cease making these questions which afforded him such exquisite sorrow.

De Gernier having taken a short walk met Leonora, who was just coming in.

The figure of Leonora appeared more interesting to him, and she but little knew the reasons that occasioned that increased pleasure. They had a slight conversation, which was dictated in the same monotonous terms of our juvenile couple.

The exalted ideas and natural bent of De Gernier's mind filled our heroine's soul with the most pleasing feelings.

"What is the reason," said she, "that my father looks so ill? I have observed, to-day in particular, that his countenance is tinged with gloomy care, and his spirits appeared unusually dejected."

"I think, my dear Leonora, that indisposition is the cause of his altered appearance; a slight cold may have impaired his spirits."

De Gernier made use of the foregoing expressions to conceal his emotions. He made no doubt that his conversation with the count was the cause of his present uneasiness, which, pressing close on his imagination, disturbed his peace, and made him give vent to his feelings; for brooding over the past scenes of his life, and suffering his ideas to wander in gloomy reflection, he gave full scope to that friendly misery, and suffered the alleviating tear to twinkle in his eyes—the tribute of delicate sensibility, the fond companion of a good heart.

Leonora and Pierre now gained the mansion.

Not long after the moon had made her appearance in unclouded grandeur, the latter resolved to take a walk, and going up the venerable avenue, he seated himself under one of the chestnuts. His ideas wandered from subject to subject, till at last they made a dead halt at the subject of his family. He took from his breast the miniature which his father had given him, and in the most fervent and sincere manner prayed for the happiness of the mortal it represented.

Leonora, who had been waiting in anxious expectation for De Gernier's return, and who was also induced by the peculiar mildness and solemnity of the evening to take a walk, went out to meet him.

As she was going down the avenue, and in search of the chevalier, she distinguished by the faint light of the moon-beams, which played sportively upon the matted thicket, a man habited in sable garments, kneeling on the ground, and with his eyes uplifted to heaven with a peculiar expression of dignity and meekness. She saw a portrait in his right hand: he placed it to his lips; and after which she heard him put forth, in the most tender tone of voice, the most ardent wishes for the safety of the individual it represented.

She was surprised and thunderstruck. Her extreme degree of astonishment riveted her to the spot; her eyes stared wildly, her hair stood erect, and her arms were suspended from her body in listless melancholy. In vain did she try to speak, for nature denied the effort.

She looked more closely at the individual, and could scarcely contain herself when she found that it was De Gernier.

She fixed her eyes on the portrait, and discovered it to be the miniature of a most beautiful woman in the bloom of youth. Dark hair flowed in wanton ringlets over the forehead; the nose was well turned, the mouth small, the form of the countenance inimitable; the lily and the carnation was the tint of the complexion, whilst the coral lips and ivory teeth gave a striking effect to the *tout-ensemble*. The shade of the countenance bore an air of tender melancholy, and the general expression of the features plainly discovered the soft feelings of a sensible mind.

Leonora's breast was filled with a multiplicity of contending passions ; she flew from De Gernier with disgust, and her soul experienced the most rankling emotions of jealousy.

When she gained her room, she broke out in the following exclamation :—

“ Is it him who thus dares to insult my orphan state by the widowed vows of another mistress ? How have I been deceived ! I could not have thought it possible such baseness could have existed in any human heart. He who solemnly swore eternal fidelity to me is now paying the most impassioned tenderness before the shrine of some more favoured mistress. Oh ! De Gernier, how false are your vows ! how treacherous your conduct ! But cease. Is it possible that our mutual congeniality of sentiment, his tender expression, and seemingly ardent love, can be false ? No, impossible ! Perhaps the miniature he is so fervently praying for represents some part of his family. It must be so ; he cannot so grossly have deceived me : his looks, his actions, and the cast of his expression, speak a language which cannot be mistaken. The shafts of his eloquence and affection are not dipt in poison, to envenom the happiness of my life ; his conduct is dictated by feeling. I am sure he loves me ; he cannot be insincere ; the many faithful vows he has made have not been plighted in vain. But let me calmly reason with myself. How unjust I am to accuse him without a reason ! Has any part of his conduct justified me to form the least unfavourable opinion of him ? Has he ever discovered any coolness in the sincerity of his vows ? Never ; they have ever been warm and impassioned, and his conduct has been uniformly faithful and affectionate. How unjust therefore is my present accusation ! I will cease to upbraid him with female jealousy, which is ever exquisitely acute, and delicately alive in discovering the duplicity of love. The female he was adoring is some part of his family, or some intimate friend now no more ; and I saw him paying, in all the holy energies of faith and sincerity, the tribute due to departed worth.”

A tear escaped her as these words were uttered from her lips. The idea of her sainted mother rushed on her imagination, and in reflecting on her memory, she found relief from her grief in a copious discharge of tears, the sad offerings of delicate sensibility.

“ Ah ! happy parent ! alas ! I now clearly perceive the strength of my father's reasoning ; happy am I that you are not in existence, to witness and to feel such accumulated distress, such heartfelt sorrow ; but, torn from all sublunary things, and from the pains and miseries of this mortal life, thou art enjoying the bliss of eternity—the reward of faith, virtue, and charity. What can be the end of the history of those strange events ? How wholly do they engage my attention ! But my imagination, in attempting to find out where they will end, is fatigued, and harassed by the fruitless toil. Am I to pass my time in eternal ignorance of the state of our affairs ? Why does my father refrain from explaining to me the leading circumstances of my family ? Surely something dreadful, and ominous of evil, is hovering over him. How portentous is this mystery ! How palpable is it to me ! Oh ! De Gernier, have pity upon me ! look with an eye of compassion on my orphan state ! I am sure your kindness and manly sensibility will stimulate you to befriend me in the hour of trouble ! I am persuaded that your intentions cannot but be the most honourable, and I will conceal in my own mind the feelings I experience, for I am sure that my delicate discrimination has here betrayed me.”

Leonora's mind rolled over a multiplicity of circumstances which materially contributed to increase the despondency of her feelings. She still doubted the integrity of De Gernier, and was as quick to chide herself for suffering it to enter into her imagination ; for upon an impartial review of the circumstances which caused her present uneasiness and gloomy suspicions, conscience proclaimed him innocent, and she pictured him in the most honourable and satisfactory light.

De Gernier appeared very melancholy at supper, but he endeavoured to shake it off as much as he could ; and the cloth being removed, he fell into a nice tête-à-tête with the count, endeavouring to remove that languid depression of the spirits which his narration to him in the morning had visibly entailed upon him.

“ How beautiful and satisfactory are the charms of solitude,” said De Gernier. “ What exquisite happiness does that man experience, who, sequestered in some rustic village with a few choice friends, tastes the pure delights of nature untainted by art ! Eye-witness of the progress which the vegetable world makes in the spring, and the rising and the setting of the sun, he takes infinite delight in the honest tone and open actions of the provincial rustics.”

“ I am sensible,” replied the count, “ that formed as man is for society, and urged as he is

to dip into the cup of pleasure by a multitude of powerful propensities, he is never so happy, or so uniformly contented, as in the shade of solitude. The blandishments of seduction, the tricks of cunning, the wily deceit of the ensnaring, the vicious excesses of the pleurist, the drunken serenades of the debauchee, and the insatiated ecstacies of dissipation, alternately pervade the minds of men, and accompany those who are infected with the sad contagion of too great a society in human intercourse. Our feelings, by an habitual practice of evil propensities, become absorbed, and we are sure eventually to perceive how fatal is the peace of him who errs from the path of virtue, and follows with heedless unconcern the thorny and pathless track of vice. The pleasures of a secluded life to those of a noisy and tumultuous intercourse are widely different; the one is the effect of nature upon the mind, the other of art upon our feelings. Since I have been forced to relinquish the pleasures of society, I am now the more enabled to appreciate those of retirement, and perceive how insipid the former are when compared with those of the latter. Believe me, I take infinite satisfaction and delight in setting myself down under the shade of some friendly oak, where I may contemplate in silent admiration the sublime beauties of nature, the grandeur of the declining sun, and the domestic sheep quitting their verdant pastures, and seeking with the setting orb their evening folds. How stately and solemn is the appearance of nature at sunset! how quiet, how calm is all! how much more gratifying to the feeling mind than the noisy sounds of festivity! How empty and unsatisfactory are the pleasures of this life, and how meanly abject when compared with those of eternity! Since I have been secluded as it were (comparatively speaking) from the society of man, I have experienced the purest happiness; I have lived in nature uncontaminated by art. The work in my garden, the sports of the field, and my evening walks, have proved infinitely more satisfactory than the cares of title, the formalities of etiquette, and the insipid pleasures of balls and entertainments. All men must necessarily own the force of solitude upon the feelings; how it elevates the ideas, expands the mind, regulates the conduct, matures the force of our wisdom, checks the sallies of youth, and teaches us to form wise and impartial opinions on the human character! A perpetual round of luxury, and an unwearied assiduity to its frivolities, afford us ultimately no earthly satisfaction; a broken constitution, ruined reputation, exhausted fortune, and a scornful and contemptuous world, are the fruits of dissipation, which is the never-failing concomitant of a fashionable life at Paris."

"I am in rapture, my dear count!" resumed De Gernier; "each sentence of your conversation inspires my soul with the most pleasing emotions. Perfectly and cordially do I acquiesce with you in all; and even during the short experience which I have had in the subtle game of life, I have ever discovered that those who profess to follow the ton of the age, assiduously try to eradicate all the latent sparks of virtue in their breasts, whilst they sow with unprofitable care the seeds of levity and extravagance, ultimately productive of no better effect than to entail certain destruction on them."

"How marvellous is it that mankind should follow with such avidity the insipid pleasures of the world! What earthly good can flow from its inglorious vanities, seductive charms, and dissipated votaries? Man is not sent into this world to follow a system of pleasure and extravagance; he is sent to prepare himself for that salvation which awaits all the good in eternity."

"Many of my own companions have, I well know, endeavoured to expose the predominant vices of their nature, whilst they assiduously tried to conceal what virtues they possessed. How ridiculous and unpraiseworthy! they deny the existence of good for the practice of the evil: what strange infatuation! what accumulated absurdity! May every amiable and well-disposed man, who is just going to embark on the troubled ocean of life, first prepare his mind in the peaceful shade of solitude, that he may steer with safety his rugged course."

"In the silent land of solitude what sublime ideas and pleasing emotions fill our breast! how gladly do we listen to the generous members of the feathered choir of songsters; what rapture do the opening buds of spring inspire into the sensible mind; how eagerly does it watch the progress of nature, and witness the industrious race of men, who with honourable industry till the land and sow the seeds in it, and view them reap the harvest of their toils!"

"What pleasure does the matured aspect of autumn afford! how the eye indulges in reposing itself on the sweet tints and beautiful shades that then cover the face of nature! It

also marks with satisfaction the approach of hoary winter, when the progress of the vegetable world is completed; when it rests from its toils, till renewed in strength and beauty to rise at the vernal call."

"Your remarks, my dear sir," replied the count, "are just; and I am pleased to find your ideas so expanded for so young a person. The experience which life has afforded me has often given me manifold occasion to bewail the many troubles and hardships I have had to encounter with, before I reaped the harvest of my exertions. I have often regretted the late date at which it arrived; at a period almost when I am not able to take advantage of its good, but only to have the nevertheless comfortable satisfaction of imparting to youth what I have been so long in obtaining. But the misfortune is, that they often ridicule the advice of maturer years; they condemn instead of praising the authors of it; and conclude by thinking that it is nothing but the prosing annoyance of old age, exercised merely for their vanity."

"Mankind but little think that they will all have, sooner or later, to run the gauntlet of experience, if they are designed to fulfil the active duties of life. The advice of years, mellowed by prudence and wisdom, is always salutary to youth, if they will but listen to its precepts; which lay down a just and solid plan of life, point out the weakness and imperfections of our nature, and also those temptations that do so easily ensnare us. I have had a difficult game to play; my card has been a tempting one, and I trust I have discharged my duty to God and man. The consciousness of doing right is the best and most lasting reward of our earthly actions. I have now been both in the private and public scenes of life; and the retrospection of that existence which in my more juvenile years has been spent in the gaiety of court and the seduction of pleasure, affords me the most lively satisfaction. I am very infirm, and find that state coming on at which we must all sooner or later arrive; and whether or not the king of terrors selects me immediately for the victim of indifference, I am prepared, and rejoice at the mention of eternity."

"Stop such mournful ideas, sir," said De Gernier; "you must yet live for the family. You may yet experience many years of comfort, happiness, and ease. It is certain that your life in this mutable and transitory abode has been a miserable one; but I hope that affairs will now take a more favourable turn; the sunshine of prosperity may enlighten the gloom of adversity, and conduct us by its friendly rays over the dark forest to the joyful temple of happiness. You have, during your trial in life, proved yourself to be a most good and virtuous Christian; you ought to exult in glad triumph that you have subdued the more rude propensities inherent in us by nature. The remaining part of my narration, which is yet very long, will, I trust, brighten up your countenance, as it will explain many circumstances in your family to which you have long been a stranger."

"Accept my thanks, my dear De Gernier," resumed the worthy count; "your conversation has greatly comforted me, and I wish that to-morrow you would finish your history. In the meantime I think it time to pay the duties of nature. I am rather tired; and I think that a good night's rest will recruit my spirits, and enable me to wait upon you to-morrow with more fortitude."

De Gernier now wished the count *bon repos*, and retired to bed; but the latter passed many restless and uncomfortable hours. He dreamt of Leonora and his sister, the many disadvantages attending the recovery of his property, and the unhappiness he should experience in so troublesome and uncomfortable a business.

Leonora was very sorry the next morning to find the count in the same state, although he endeavoured as much as possible to assume his wonted vivacity of manner; but still his spirits relaxed at times into a mournful despondency and painful grief.

De Gernier received a letter the next morning from Paris, which forced him to quit the count immediately.

He communicated this intelligence to him, who was much affected, and could scarcely find words to say, "You will soon return; at least I hope it will not be long, for I shall much miss your society, and more particularly at this painful crisis."

"That is quite uncertain," replied our hero; "business, with which I cannot acquaint you till completed, forces me to leave you without delay, and I am very sorry at so unfavourable a time, but it is unavoidable. Perhaps you will think it rather ungenerous and unfeeling of me; but the future will, I trust evince the contrary. The reasons which force me to tear myself

from your society are strong and weighty; perhaps they will be ultimately productive of good, which I well know, while you kindly enter into my feelings, you will readily imagine will be the case."

The latter part of De Gernier's conversation gave some comfort to the drooping soul of the count, who, as well as Leonora, was much, very much affected at his intended departure.

"Pray return to us soon," exclaimed Leonora. "I cannot exist in your absence, as I shall feel it with more peculiar force at this interesting point."

"I will do all in my power, and endeavour to return as soon as possible," said De Gernier.

Having soothed our heroine's and her father's feelings as much as he could, he soon began to prepare for his departure, which he fixed to take place the next morning. He requested an interview with Leonora, in which he gave her some slight hints on the state of her affairs, and encouraged her to look forward for future happiness. But his conversation, however good might have been the intent, served only to increase her wonder and suspense. She requested him to explain himself more fully, but he begged that she would cease to trouble him with any unnecessary questions, as the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed denied him the satisfaction of giving her a faithful information.

It afforded De Gernier singular disquietude of mind, that the state of affairs in which he was situated denied him the power of satisfying those requests which Leonora so tenderly made to him.

Having taken a most affectionate adieu of the count and his daughter, he mounted his horse, and was soon out of sight.

At first he stopped to take a farewell look of the scenes from which he was so suddenly called away; but checking himself for indulging in so weak a propensity, he pursued his way without heeding the mansion which contained all that was dear to him in life.

Leonora's eye followed him as far as it could, till at last his figure faded from her sight, and was lost amongst the undistinguishable objects in the horizon. Breaking forth in a most violent exclamation, she suffered the following words to escape her lips:—

"Oh De Gernier, how cruel are you to leave me at this momentous crisis! and still more, when so much is required to be explained, and so much to be effected, which your interest and honourable exertions for our welfare would have instigated you to accomplish. Yet why do I blame you? Can I pry into your secret reasons, and wish to know your family causes? I am as yet ignorant of that part of your family which you have long promised to acquaint me with, but of which I have nevertheless been kept in sad ignorance. Your causes are strong and cogent, and are of a nature the most important, or else they would not have made the strong impression on your countenance which your features so openly discovered. Ah, my father, can you live to witness the final close of these inexplicable mysteries, which accumulate on all sides, to our astonishment and distress? How long am I to bury myself in this lonesome solitude, and be eye-witness of that melancholy which shades the features of my honoured parent's countenance. Oh! my sainted mother, happy am I that you are not in existence, to share the common evil of life, but are smiling in happy eternity, and looking down upon us with an eye of compassion as we are travelling our weary road along the desert of this dreary pilgrimage."

The idea of the miniature which she saw in De Gernier's hand called up fresh images of grief in her mind; she mused on the possibility of the subject it represented being in some measure the cause which called him away from the villa—perhaps on the eve of happiness—yet she blushed when she suffered such unjust ideas to enter into her mind. She pictured De Gernier in far too honourable a light to be so glaring a victim of duplicity, or to tamper with her orphan state.

Leonora passed many mournful hours with the count, whose spirits were visibly dejected. The roses of youthful temperance, which blowed on his cheek in unrivalled lustre, now began to fade; his manly nerves and capacious powers were enervated; the hand of time, increased by calamity, was marking his features with its iron rod. His health began to decline, which gave Leonora the most heartfelt sorrow; nothing contributed to raise their drooping spirits, save an intended visit from her aunt, the Countess de Santé, who was expected in a few days. She looked forward to the event in anxious expectation, and fondly anticipated that the lively and interesting society of the countess would greatly contribute to cheer their spirits, and

depress that gloom of sorrow which characterized them as the unfortunate subjects of grief.

A change in her present situation was doubly felt, as she hoped that in the friendly and agreeable society of her aunt she might forget the subject of De Gérne's sudden departure, and gain an oblivion to all her heart-rending woes. But the lively circle of merriment is not always calculated to blunt the sharp edge of calamity: the spirit of woe will intrude itself, and be an unwelcome visitor to damp the glowing prospects of youth, and stop the progress of good. She considered not for herself: no, it was for her father; it was for him she wished so particularly for the countess's society; for the extreme degree of affection which mutually marked them through life was an invaluable circumstance to promote the complexion of those wishes which Leonora had now so fondly in contemplation.

Her delicate sensibility was quick in discovering her father's feelings, which were very fluctuating as they successively rolled from one subject to another; and in proportion as the sorrow of the case was discovered, so did it operate on his spirits.

She was pleased in his sober reflections to trace the past scenes of his life, which were ever dear to him, and mournfully pleasing. In his youth he had seen life in much gayer forms than those of rustic simplicity; but solitude, matured by judgment, made him depreciate those images of pleasure which his youthful imagination had portrayed of mankind.

He but too truly found that adversity is the best school to try the affections of the heart, for man learns there how to appreciate those blessings which in prosperity he lavished away in profuse wantonness, partly in the display of vain and ignoble pageantry, in costly attire, sumptuous banquets, and in satisfying the delicate palates of a crowd of pampered menials. All the virtues which can possibly adorn the character of man, either in public or private life, may, and indeed often do take place, and flourish in the soil of adversity, if the necessary diligence is paid in the spring to reap a productive and abundant harvest. View the land of prosperity wasted and drained, and its very soil poisoned by the noxious weeds which choked its very heart.

Friendship also in prosperity is very precarious; it is often leagued with vice, and its subjects companions in drunkenness, or panders of villainy, rather than real friends. But those who have weathered the storm of adversity, and have steered their course with safety to the welcome port, are alone able to enjoy its blessings and appreciate their influence. Consider the origin of friendship, how extensively it differs from the modern maxims of this social virtue. It is one of the best and most genial affections of the heart, when its sacred duties are well understood, followed with rectitude, and its subjects well chosen.

Youth are in general apt to suppose that congeniality of sentiment, similarity of taste, and unanimity of idea form the principal traits in a friend's character.

Now these are measures which at once defeat the ends of true sincerity, and totally disqualify its subjects from enjoying its social and invaluable blessings; for if, in the first case, a mutual sameness of opinion marks them both, how are they to correct each other's frailties or natural imperfections? And in the next, the same ideas and sentiments cannot instruct or invent different views to expand the pleasures of prosperity, or mitigate the sorrows of adversity. Those who are linked together by the bonds of infamy and licentiousness, and are emphatically styled sworn friends, are, in the true and literal sense of the word, bitter foes; for we have the strongest conviction of the short-lived connexion of this vile intrigue and base company by its sure and certain termination in misery, evil, and remorse.

A true friend will point out the errors of weakness in our nature, will rather censure than praise us for our faults, will suggest those measures the best calculated to eradicate them from our hearts, and will give us that general consolation in distress which will disarm calamity of its strongest power, and blunt grief's sharpest sting.

The count used often to say to Leonora, "that to be amiable in prosperity is one of the most difficult estates to bear in life." He tried to alleviate the melancholy of his daughter as much as he could, for Leonora imagined that she was of all creatures the most miserable in existence. In vain did she look to any quarter for comfort, for the ears of pity and humanity were deaf to her petitions; yet she endeavoured to shake off her distress by enforcing the doctrine of other people's misery being greater than her own, but it ill contributed to make her perfectly happy and composed.

Leonora, who was young, and consequently felt every vicissitude of fortune with peculiar sharpness, did not combat with its force with such courage and intrepidity as did the count, whose mind, long familiarized to sorrow, could easily support any increased change; at least from external appearance, for he did not suffer his distressed state to prey upon his spirits with such violence as did Leonora. Indeed it was his place to correct the sorrow of his child, and to inspire into her agonized mind the holy energies of resignation, which is the best reward in this life; for the more piety and fortitude we discover in resisting the calamities of our existence in this our dreary pilgrimage, the more shall we eventually be rewarded.

The good Leonora did in the parish, and the fame she had acquired as a virtuous and tender-hearted woman, afforded her the most lively satisfaction.

The count was very intimate with Monsieur St Merville, the pastor of the village, who was a quiet, domestic, middle-aged man. He was a good companion for the count, and listened to the tale of his sufferings with peculiar sympathy and compassion. He extolled the virtues of Leonora; and the good which she universally did escaped not his observation.

It was her daily toil to visit the cottages of the poor, to examine into their wants, and to select such objects for her charity as she deemed the most fit, and the most in need of her assistance.

The stories of the humble rustics greatly amused her; and some of their narrations were told in so strange a manner, that they frequently awakened emotions of surprise in her breast.

The histories of haunted castles were the predominant topics of their conversation; indeed some were so emphatically related, and in so singular a manner, as when delivered from the mouths of rustics, they carried with them the character of truth.

On any other occasion she might have been induced to attach credit to their artless and simple tales, however greatly they might border on the marvellous; but, incredulous from misfortune, her suspicions instigated her to deprecate the veracity of the peasants.

Some indeed were excepted from the code of her regulations.

CHAPTER VI.

"The martyr cheaply purchases his heaven; small are his sufferings, great his reward. Not so the wretch who combats love with duty; whose mind, weakened and dissolved by soft passion, feeble and hopeless, opposes his own desires."—GEORGE BARNWELL.

But however ready Leonora was to be incredulous, a tale which was told by an old woman, who lived near the villa, arrested in particular her most serious attention. One evening taking her accustomed walk to the old dame's cottage, to hear the common news of the village, the state of their chit-chat suggested the following strange narration.

"Report says, my dear miss, that an old chateau, about ten leagues from hence, has been long haunted; but how far this assertion is confined to truth, will appear from the following particulars, which I am enabled to give you from the best authority.

"My boy Henry having occasion to travel over this lonely forest, as he was going on business to Paris, and the road being very difficult to discover, he lost his way, and proceeded along the forest for miles without one single object appearing to mark it out. He looked about for a light, but all was involved in pitchy darkness. He began to be painfully alarmed, and still more so at the dreadful howlings of the wild beasts with which the forest abounded. He went on very cautiously, afraid of getting out of his track, lest he should become the victim of the beasts of prey. He looked around to discover a light, but nothing but the waving blackness of the forest could be distinguished. The wind, which sighed mournfully, was now in unison with his feelings. Immerged in fear, and half dead with anguish, he proceeded along a path which the silver rays of the moon pointed out. He followed it for a long time, till tired and wearied by disappointment and distress, he sat himself down on a mossy bank in the forest, which was wet with the heavy dew which covered the face of nature. All of a sudden he thought he saw a man kneeling before a most beautiful woman, and his apprehensions were confirmed when he heard the woman distinctly utter the following piercing words: 'O cruel sir! not even your power and tyranny can alter my widowed vows—I have resolutely sworn never to be yours, and it is in vain for me to endeavour to comply with your unjustifiable requests.'

"Astonished and thunderstruck, he proceeded a little farther, and concealing himself

behind a large oak tree, he had a full view of the man and the woman ; the former was a brutal, savage-looking monster, whose countenance plainly spoke the foulness of his heart, ready to trample on the most sacred rights of nature and the chastity of youth. The face of the injured fair one bore the aspect of placid melancholy. The storms of passion and the cruelty of power had robbed her lily cheeks of the youthful roses which else would have blushed in a crimson glow. Her figure was majestic, and her mien graceful. Henry heard them both utter some faint expressions, which plainly discovered to him that it was some monster who endeavoured to triumph over the helpless state of some innocent virgin.

“ He was on the point of rushing on the villain, and rescuing the lady from her pitiable state, when the appearance of three domestics denied him the power of executing his wish. He crept close to the trunk of the tree, afraid of being discovered ; but his fears soon abated, for he saw the lady mounted on a horse, and she rode fast away with the attendants. Plunged into an abyss of reflection, and tired with pain and misery, he was going to faint with grief, only a light at a distance re-animated his spirits ; and flushed with the hopes of getting a night’s lodging, he made all possible haste, and soon arrived at the place from which the light proceeded. It issued forth from an ancient chateau, which was situated in the most gloomy part of the forest, and, added to the wild horror of the scene, looked strikingly awful. The turreted corners of grey stone peeped through the tops of the trees as lighted by the silver brightness of the moon, which threw her shadowy beams over the chateau, leaving some part shrouded in gloom whilst the other features were distinctly seen. It was an ancient building, which had long withstood winter’s heavy siege ; the hand of time had deepened the shades of the angles, impairing in some parts the battlements that frowned in sullen majesty over the romantic scenery around.

“ With cautious and tremulous steps, Henry advanced to the south gate, which he found to his disappointment to be locked. He walked in silent grief all around the moat which surrounded the chateau, and discovered the bridge to be drawn.

“ Exhausted by fatigue, and faint with hunger, he advanced to the great gate, and ringing the bell most furiously, he awoke the porter, who humanely came to his assistance.

“ Henry was urged on to commit this presumptuous deed by the call of nature, resolving as the last expedient to awaken the inhabitants to a sense of his situation.

“ The porter coming to his help, said, ‘ Pray, friend, what brings you here at this late hour ? and what are your commands ? My orders are not to let a person into this mansion.’

“ ‘ Have pity on me,’ said Henry, ‘ and grant me one night’s lodging, for I have been wandering over this forest for these last five or six hours, but in fruitless expectation of finding relief to my distressed situation ; and urged on by the glimmering light, which appeared as it were to re-animate my drooping courage, I arrived at the place from whence it issued, in silent expectation that you would have pity on me, and grant me that relief which nature so implicitly requires.’

“ ‘ Well, friend,’ said the porter, ‘ as the hour of midnight is rapidly coming on, and as you are far from the next town, and not near to any hamlet where you could procure any assistance, I will this time favour your wishes, and accommodate you as well as I can, upon oath that you will never reveal the secret of my having let you in.’

“ ‘ Rely on my fidelity to obey honourably the commands you enjoin me to execute,’ said Henry. ‘ You may rest assured that, upon the honour of a man, I will never discover the circumstance of my having been in the chateau to anybody save to my mother.’

“ ‘ Well, friend,’ replied the porter, ‘ upon those terms let us come in.’ Having opened the gate, he proceeded along a gloomy avenue of trees, which the faint expression of the lighted candle barely distinguished.

“ The faithful domestic offered Henry some refreshment, of which he gladly partook, not having tasted any for many hours.

“ The old porter having made a blazing fire, and prepared the collation, Henry made a most hearty and comfortable repast. Having finished his supper, and thanking his generous host in the sincerest manner, he informed him of the interview between the man and the woman whom he discovered in the forest. ¶

“ The porter was astonished beyond measure, and no longer doubted that the frequent visits of his master to the forest were directed by some love scheme, and being compelled by

the honour of his station, and the fidelity which he always observed to his master, not to pry into the secrets of the master, he divested himself of his establishment at Henry's tale as much as possible, and told him that he was not much surprised at his conversation ; for the gloominess of the forest, its retirement, and the loneliness of the situation, offered many incentives to those individuals who were anxious to profess clandestinely their vows of eternal fidelity. The conclusion which the venerable domestic made was ill calculated to soften the wonder of Henry, which was, from the conversation of the porter, still more increased. He expatiated on the particular manner in which he found them, the language of the fair one, and the sudden appearance of the men who rushed from the thicket. 'All these,' rejoined Henry, 'cannot be dictated by common-place passion ; but the power and cruelty of a monster, who is aiming at the destruction of some weak and helpless virgin.'

"The state of the porter's mind was agitated at Henry's conversation ; he hardly knew what reply to make ; but persisting in his first assertion, he concluded by adding, that he must have mistaken the nature of the conversation of the parties.

"Henry finding it useless to gain any information respecting the mysterious couple, and still more astonished at finding that his kind host was unwilling to assist him in the discovery of the people, he dropped the subject, and the conversation presently rolled on the history of the castle ; but in this matter the porter also observed a profound silence ; he only informed Henry that he had not been there long, and that he was quite ignorant of the means by which his master became possessed of the castle, and that he was away, and constantly locked up the gates when he was out.

"Henry endeavoured to gain more information, and wanted to go over the rooms of the chateau, but this was positively refused.

"Finding that the porter maintained an unconquerable silence in all matters relating to the family mansion, and on all other topics, he heartily thanked him for his liberal treatment, and wishing him good night retired to bed, but to a sleepless couch ; for his ideas, racked by the strange succession of mysterious events which rushed on his imagination, denied him the bliss of sound sleep. He had a most confused and strange dream ; he imagined that the individual he saw in the forest was the owner of the castle ; and that having seduced some innocent virgin to his mansion, had led her into the forest, in hopes of bringing her over to his wishes, but in vain. He fancied he saw her in her return, and seat to a damp and cold prison ; her bed of straw, and her food bread and water ; he pictured her weak and emaciated, worn out by grief and misery ; and in a dying tone breathing forth her last words, 'I forgive you, but I cannot be yours.'

"The conversation of the old man pleased closely on his imagination ; it heightened the mysterious charm, and added to the strange dream which he experienced ; he had no slight reasons for thinking that the ruffian-like being he met during his melancholy pilgrimage was the owner of the castle.

"The porter also passed a very restless night ; he ruminated on the subject of Henry's tale to him, and his fears lest his master should detect him in having suffered the stranger to come into the chateau. Henry having arose from his bed, was about to take his departure, when his host, wishing to have a few minutes' conversation with him, requested him to follow him into an adjoining room. It was only to show him the state of his mind, and to blind as much as possible his ideas concerning the interview in the forest. He enjoined him to profound secrecy in all, and also requested him to reveal to nobody the subject of his night's lodging ; but having made the former stipulation with the porter, he has not committed himself by giving me a detail of all the marvellous events which he has experienced during his lonely pilgrimage.

"Henry having thanked the venerable domestic for his liberal treatment, he wished him adieu, heartily glad to get away from so gloomy and terrific-looking a mansion. He imagined that all the time he was in the chateau he was not safe, and indeed he often thought he heard a noise, which materially increased his fears. His mind when he reached home was much agitated, and he told me the whole of the narrative which I have been acquainting you with. With peculiar emphasis he begged me to keep it a secret to all, save to your ladyship, to whom he said I might reveal the whole matter ; as, he added, he was sure that he could rely on your confidence and integrity. You are the only person, madam, whom I have

made acquainted with this tale ; which, strange indeed as it may appear, is perfectly true in all its stages. My son will testify any assertion which I have made, as he was eye-witness of the facts, and first informed me of them all."

" Well, dame," said Leonora, " I must confess that your's is rather a singular narrative ; and cannot forbear congratulating your son on escaping the dangers which were likely to befall him, and seemingly threatened him on all sides."

The real state of Leonora's mind throughout the whole of the old woman's narrative, the unconnected manner by which the castle devolved on the mysterious possessor, called up in her mind the possibility, and likewise the probability, of its being her father's mansion ; and the event at which she was so much amazed was one which nearly concerned herself, and was intimately connected with the family. She interrogated the old woman concerning the couple and the chateau ; but the good old dame, resolving not to commit herself by asserting those things which ignorance would suggest, professed an utter unacquaintance with all other topics concerning the matter. She said that she had communicated all with which she was acquainted, and could give her no more information.

Leonora took inexpressible delight in the conversation of this agreeable old woman, who was capable of affording her much instruction and amusement, as she was sensible and well informed, having had a most liberal education. The calamities and vicissitudes with which life is chequered, forced her to withdraw from the more enlightened sphere of the world, to settle in her present low and humble condition ; but rich in intellect and in mind, rather than in purse, her enjoyments were the fewer, but more rational ; and select, but the more lasting.

The advice she gave Leonora was invaluable ; the manner of her expression was lively and interesting ; for, divested of the grave and solemn manner of the austere and profound reasoner, she added to good humour, vivacity, and sprightliness, a great dignity of expression and commanding manner, which awed strangers into uniform acquiescence with the dictates of her reason.

She was a great comfort to our heroine, and amused her often with a most pleasant tale.

The conviction of the present, applied as it might be to the past, operated strongly on her mind ; yet she resolved not to acquaint her father ; indeed she was bound not to do it, and she determined to keep him in utter ignorance of the narrative which the old woman told her in so impressive a manner.

Leonora, who had been kept in profound ignorance of the real causes which instigated her father to quit the family mansion, at least as far as enabled her to apply the subject of the old woman's conversation individually to her family affairs, consequently determined to pass over the subject with heedless unconcern, and endeavour as much as possible to shake off its existence from her mind.

She now ruminated on the subject of De Germier's departure from the villa ; his absence rose forcibly to her mind, and she wished more than ever that he had been present to have heard the old dame's tale. " Perhaps," thought she, " his penetration might have discovered who the mysterious party were whom Henry met in the forest, and the strange event attending the chateau."

Leonora thought that the stern silence which the porter so implicitly maintained discovered at once his fears ; and his unwillingness in answering any of Henry's questions, fully justified her to suppose that some unlawful measures attended the true possession of the castle.

Leonora, when going to take her leave, was rather surprised in finding it quite dark ; but fortunately for her the moon appeared to light her home, which but a few minutes before was enveloped in a thick cloud.

When she gained the cottage, her father expressed his fears of her catching cold from her imprudence in staying out so late ; but these she soon defeated by saying that she was well wrapped up, and had only come from the old woman's house.

At first she resolved to communicate the strange tale to her father, but thinking that it might call up fresh images of grief in his mind, she checked the desire ; she longed to know the explanation of the old dame's narration, and truly regretted her own incapability of finding it out.

She had often been accustomed to hear the most marvellous stories, but in general they were overdrawn ; but this wore the character of truth. Besides, she could not doubt the

veracity of the good old woman, nor the integrity of her son, who was the messenger of the first tidings; but whether it were true or not, since external things did not seem to offer her any assistance, she wished that it might be buried in eternal oblivion, never more to occupy her mind, or harass her feelings.

She passed a most uncomfortable night, but, upon the whole, rather better than she had reason to expect from the state of her mind when she went to bed.

She awoke early the next morning, and rising, took a walk, being induced by the peculiar beauty and mildness of the air. Far to the east appeared the majestic orb, which was just rising in glorious splendour, and, shedding a crimson glow all over the horizon, seemed to blush at the supineness of man, for the busy world was yet asleep. "Business had not yet shook off his sound sleep, and riot had but just reclined its giddy head." The lark was just ascending to the heavens with her morning carol, the tribute of praise to Almighty God.

Leonora was charmed with the stillness of the scene; she seated herself on the bank of a small cascade, where the hollow dashing of the streams along the meadow lulled her senses into a kind of temporary oblivion to all the calamities of her past life. The stillness of sleeping nature was in unison with her innate feelings; she gazed on all around with transports of joy, and contemplated with sacred pleasure the glorious work of nature. She took infinite delight in culling the wild flowers which flourished in luxuriant abundance, shedding unregarded their sweetness on the desert air. She gathered some of the choicest, and compared them with those reared by care and art. How great was the disparity! how widely different in simplicity and elegance!

The skill of mechanism and the ingenuity of art are mean and trifling in comparison with the unstudied air of nature, which mocks the presumption of all who emulate her plain works.

"What," thought Leonora, "can be more chastely delicate than the lily of the valley, or what more towering and noble than the wild fox-glove."

She indulged herself in placid reflection till the beams of the sun awoke mankind, and summoned them to rise from their drowsy pillows to fulfil the active duties of the day.

She now walked to the villa, and was agreeably met by her father, who had risen early.

"I am glad, my dear Leonora," said the count, "that your aunt will have so fine a day for her journey, and I hope she will arrive before dinner."

"Happy am I, my dear papa," rejoined Leonora, "that nothing will now deprive us of that pleasure which I have long anticipated; her charming society will make an agreeable change, and I trust will mend your spirits, which I am much concerned to witness in their present delicate state."

"Do not distress yourself, my dear child," resumed her father; "I am much better than you think, and I appear. The cruelty of oppression, and the consequent infirmities of age, are the causes which mark my countenance with sorrow, and depress my spirits with gloom; but believe me I suffer not the expression of grief to escape my lips, but resign myself humbly till that blissful period arrives which will reward my sufferings in a happy eternity."

"Do not talk so, pray dear papa," resumed Leonora; "remember that you have a family to look after, and you must not think about eternity, for a good man is always prepared to meet death without fear and amazement, and never shudders at the idea of dissolution."

"I admire your kind enthusiasm," replied her father, "and may I yet live many years for your comfort and happiness! for should the hour of dissolution tear me away at this moment from my dear child, the pangs and stings which she would endure would not let me die in peace. But no more to pass away your time on so mournful a subject, and wound your feelings by the anticipation of that awful event which must eventually take place,—for strong as is your fortitude, I will not unnecessarily put it to the test,—go, my dear Leonora, and prepare the rooms and arrange the flowers against the arrival of your aunt."

She did all which her father enjoined her to do, and was very busy in adjusting every individual thing for the comfort and satisfaction of her aunt.

She walked to the parsonage and asked the venerable prelate, Monsieur St Merville, to dinner, who gladly accepted the invitation, and also congratulated Leonora on the pleasure and satisfaction she would experience from the intended visit of her aunt.

It may not perhaps be amiss to give our readers some slight account of the family of Monsieur St Merville.

This good clergyman had lost his wife about twelve years ago, an event which tintured his mind with sorrow and melancholy. She left an only child, and his chief care was now to instruct the mind and train the principles of his boy in that course which he designed him to follow in life. His son was about seven years old when his wife died; an age when he first took occasion to sow the seeds of religion in his mind. Having instructed him in all the first branches of the profession he destined him to follow, which was the church, he sent him to college, where he early discovered the dawnings of a bright mind.

He soon distinguished himself by his talent, piety, and benevolence: he applied himself most assiduously to his respective studies, and obtained that commendation, esteem, and admiration which, by his well-earned works and faithful actions, he so justly merited. He was faithful and sincere as a friend, and holy and virtuous as a rising prelate. He was admired by all, and universally obtained the most unequivocal praise. He was a great comfort to his father, whom he honoured and revered.

Lionel was now about nineteen years of age, and was soon going to take orders, when at the full age; and when he was enabled to perform the duties of the church, he was to take the situation of his father; who, being very old and infirm, was but ill calculated to execute his ecclesiastical functions.

Monsieur St Merville often retired amidst the mountains of the surrounding scenery, where he contemplated the past hours of his life, and resigned himself with rapture to the luxury of the moment. A placid melancholy was fixed on his brow, to which he was long familiarised, and which was mellowed by time. He took infinite delight, and ever discovered a most tender concern for the feelings of the count. Himself the victim of sad sorrow, he was particularly able to sympathise most feelingly with him on the past scenes of his life.

He often retired to a seat under the yew tree which shaded the tomb of his dearly beloved wife, and read the monumental inscription, which he composed himself, with an elevated tone of sacred devotion; first rising to the fire and climax of religion, then sinking into the soft cadence of friendly sorrow. His mind was expanded, his heart sincere, and his actions just, virtuous, and upright; he was quiet and composed, and a dignified elevation of thought settled on his countenance, which was nevertheless frank and undisguised. He was the friend of the needy, and a constant advocate for every social right. He discovered a laudable exertion in executing with conscientious fidelity his parochial duties, and was adored and esteemed by all. He often related to the count the death of his dear wife, who shed tears at the tender recital.

Monsieur St Merville was a man of all others the best calculated to adorn the society of the worthy count, as he was a man in whom he could confide, and relate without fear the past sufferings of his life.

He liked Lionel, and often asked him to his villa; but the tender passion which he discovered for Leonora greatly grieved her, and she was at last forced to show him, but in the most honourable manner, the painful state of her mind.

Lionel listened with agony to the conversation of Leonora, and lamented his bitter fate, for he was far too amiable and ingenuous to invade the widowed love of Leonora; for such she thought that it was, having parted with De Gernier with the melancholy prospect of never seeing him again.

She saw the state of Lionel's feelings, and assured him that as long as he lived his virtues would always arrest her attention, and claim the most undivided admiration; but any further she could not say anything, as having irrevocably given her hand to another, she could not honourably break that vow of eternal fidelity which she had sworn to his love.

This materially hurt the peace of Lionel, as he was obliged to combat with the flame of the most tender passion and the conscientiousness of strict duty, which he ever considered as one of his chief attributes. His manly integrity and good sense suggested to him, that the best plan to adopt would be to tear himself from the object of his affection; absence would effect a material cure, and in the enthusiasm of study, and the virtuous discharge of his duties, he would soon forget the tender subject of his melancholy, and obtain that relief in a remote place to which he was now so utter a stranger.

Leonora proffered him the most open terms of sincerity, which he most thankfully embraced; yet every time he thought of her the workings of his passion heated his imagination, fired his soul, and he raved with despair; but still, when reason calmed the paroxysms of his love, and

checked its salies, he viewed his state with impartial judgment, and severely rebuked himself for kindling that flame which it was his duty to extinguish.

His father was not a stranger to his feelings, but thinking that his interference might add fresh grief to the fuel of his son's love; and also be the means of recalling in his mind the image of his passion, he did not point out that object, the remembrance of which occasioned him the sharpest sorrow and the most poignant anguish.

He left his son to follow his own plans, trusting to his integrity and strength of mind, to discriminate the course which he ought to follow.

The count, who was also eye-witness of the whole, pitied the feelings of the prelate's son, but did not give him the least hope of encouragement, as the hand of Leonora was to be given to the faithful De Gernier when circumstances could conveniently unite them.

Lionel perceiving that all hopes of success on either side were fruitless, and that De Gernier was the favoured man, resigned himself to his grief, and at once determined to exile himself from the society of Leonora, which he thought would be the only means of obtaining relief to his distressed and agonized feelings. He generously laid open to his father the state of his mind, who also advised him to follow the plans which he had so wisely suggested.

He accordingly set out for the university, where he resolved to stay, and endeavour to shake off that grief and sorrow which he saw was impossible to elude by remaining in the present vicinity. When he arrived at college he applied himself with unwearied assiduity to his respective studies, and soon partly forgot the reasons which forced him to quit the village so soon.

Yet love is so powerful a propensity, that when once it eats into the mind, its corroding cares and painful workings are so great, that it requires a vast deal of fortitude, time, and patience to effect a cure.

All these experiments Lionel resolv'd to put into practice, and fondly hoped that by following its maxims he should soon forget the invincible, and seemingly irresistible, charms of the lovely and the enchanting Leonora.

Leaving poor Lionel to the painful effusions of sorrow, let us now attend to the summons of the count, who was congratulating his sister the Countess de Santá on her pleasant journey and happy arrival at the cottage.

She was much pleased with the situation of the place, which commanded a bold romantic northern view.

Leonora asked her aunt a multiplicity of questions, all in one breath; and before she could get any reply, another succession rapidly followed.

"How did you leave Paris? How are your friends there? and what is the news?" rapidly escaped her lips.

The countess answered all her questions with the most affectionate solicitude, but expressed the most tender concern for the altered looks and dejected spirits of the count, which were nevertheless much more lively than they were wont to be.

He took the first opportunity of acquainting the countess with the singular circumstances which took place since the last time he had the pleasure of seeing her. He informed her of the whole history of De Gernier, pointed in the strongest manner how he was connected to the family, and dwelt with eloquent emphasis on the subject of his rapid departure.

The countess was much agitated at her brother's recital, and was much astonished at the sudden departure of De Gernier from the villa, particularly at so critical a time. She thought that something of the greatest magnitude called him away, or else he would not have left the count in such dreadful anxiety and deep sorrow.

"How manly and virtuous is this youth," thought she: "how honourable and ingenuous! Happy am I in the honour of so illustrious a relation."

When the subject of De Gernier's departure was mentioned to Leonora, she discovered the most tender emotions and painful anxiety.

The countess comforted her during his absence, and instilled into her mind the hopes of future happiness. She walked with her every night, during which time she gave her the most tender advice. She exercised her kind solicitude to explain all subjects, the good of which Leonora thankfully embraced. Her niece being a great admirer of nature, she often led her aunt to some of the most beautiful spots near the villa. One evening she conducted

to a small glade in the amphitheatre of the forest, and seating themselves on the trunk of an aged oak tree, they contemplated the wild grandeur of the scene. The waving blackness of the forest, the venerable appearance of the oak trees, which, stretching their gigantic branches far over the ground, gave them a most delightful shade; the luxuriance of the wild flowers, which were smiling on all sides; the matted thickness of the under-wood, and their dark and trackless paths, astonished and elevated their feelings to the most pleasing contemplation.

They had not been here long before the sun sunk behind the western mountain, a golden hue diffused itself through all the forest, all was calm and serene, not a wind agitated the leaves of the trees; here reigned a deadly calm. They remained in the forest a long time, transported by the most ecstatic delights.

Leonora pointed out the beauties around her in the most tender manner, which gave the countess real pleasure, and also in witnessing the expanded mind of her niece. The shades of night warned them to return to the villa, which they soon did, after a most beautiful and delightful walk.

The night was unusually clear, and the air singularly mild and soft; thousands of stars studded the brilliant canopy above; the moon reigned in cloudless majesty; all was hushed in the solemn stillness of death, save where the dashing murmurs of a distant wave played wantonly in the vale below.

The grey turrets of a distant chateau peeped through a small avenue of the forest, as the moon threw a shadowy glance at its proud grandeur.

The busy world was now at rest from its toils, and all was quiet, save riot's giddy throng.

"How many delights," said the count, "do those people lose who pass their time at the festive board of luxury and dissipation! what a sacrifice of time and social happiness do they really make!"

"Ah! my dear brother," replied the countess, "would to heaven that I had always to witness this enchanting spectacle! would to God that I was far away from the flattery and deceit of the gay scenes of Paris! Ah! I wish that I was exiled from its unsatisfactory delights and expensive pleasures! What hours of true happiness have I this evening experienced with Leonora! I wantedon in the pure delights of nature, admired her works, and was astonished at the presumption of art. In contemplating the grandeur of the wide horizon, the solitary pomp of the forest, the mountain regions rearing their gigantic heads, tinged with the dappled hue of the fading splendour of the west, I estranged myself from the crowded assemblies, gay parties, and costly banquets of Paris, and their satisfaction was poor indeed when compared with the heavenly scene which I witnessed with Leonora. Here all is openness of mind and fairness of dealing; there, all guile and intrigue, temporizing chicanery, and insidious duplicity."

The count and countess passed their time till supper in a pleasing conversation on the beauties of solitude, and how satisfactory were their delights, in comparison with those of the more tumultuous scenes of life.

The countess was so much pleased with the situation of the villa, and the romantic scenery of the adjacent country, added to the agreeable and interesting society of Leonora and her father, that she determined to prolong her visit more than she had at first intended, which was gladly received by the family, who took infinite pleasure in having the countess at the cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Tryman.* 'Tis strange—but I have done; say but you hate me not.

Barnwell. Hate you! I am not that monster yet.

Tryman. Perhaps you pity me?

Barnwell. I do—I do—Indeed I do."—*Lillo.*"

It is now full time to return to De Gernier, who left the Count de Gras in a great hurry, without giving him the least reason for his departure.

It will be seen how far he was justified for his strange conduct, and at once unfold the mystery that called him away. The letter which he received was from Monsieur Duclôe, the person whom he so generously befriended in distress. It may not perhaps be amiss to lay before our readers the contents of Monsieur Duclôe's letter, which was as follows:—

Monsieur Duclôs to Monsieur de Gernier.

"**MY DEAR SIR**,—I can no longer withhold from you certain papers which I think materially concern the welfare of your family. The manner in which I became possessed of these writings makes me shudder for the consequences; and as the workings of conscience force me to make an ample confession to the only friend that I have now in existence, I beg you will meet me in Paris with the least possible delay. Let nothing detain you, for procrastination may prove fatal.

"Yours very faithfully,

"J. M. Duclôs."

When De Gernier had finished reading the contents of this epistle, it may be remembered that he instantly communicated to the count his necessity of quitting the villa for the present; which intelligence greatly affected his spirits, more particularly at a time when De Gernier was disclosing circumstances which concerned his happiness and comfort. But his mind, long familiarized to sorrow and disappointment, bore the stern decree of Providence with manly fortitude.

When De Gernier reached Paris, he immediately proceeded to answer the summons of his friend, whom he found in great agony and affliction. His mind was oppressed with the stings of conscience; and the workings of his soul, on seeing his friend, that friend who pitied him in the hour of trouble, became legible in his face; tears supplied the place of words, and he fell on the breast of his friend and wept.

"I am sorry to see you thus oppressed with affliction," said De Gernier.

"Ah! do not say affliction, my dear fellow; rather stung by the pangs of an agonizing conscience," retorted the distracted Duclôs.

This conversation, and the appearance of Monsieur Duclôs, greatly agitated De Gernier, who could not in the least account for the strange manner and unaccountable expression of his friend.

He retraced the scenes of his former life, and soon attributed his dejected countenance to some fresh calamity brought on by gambling; yet Duclôs informed him that he had certain papers which would be of great service to him. What these papers were, if they were of any good, and even if they were, how he came by them, greatly surprised him. He endeavoured in his own mind to solve this difficult history, but in vain. He now sat himself down by his friend, and informed him that he was anxious to hear the whole of what he wrote about, and also added that he would maintain the most inviolable secrecy if he wished it.

Duclôs's mind appeared greatly agitated. "Can I," exclaimed the unhappy man, "rely on your integrity? Will you give me your word of honour, as a man and an officer, that you will reveal to nobody living the method by which I obtained the papers which I shall give you, except I alter my opinions on the subject?"

"You may depend on my fidelity, my dear sir; and whatever are the reasons you wish to conceal which instigated you to gain possession of the papers, I will for ever bury in lasting oblivion."

"You are too good, my dear De Gernier; I find I can no longer keep you in ignorance of the foulness of my deeds; yet I trust, when you shall have become acquainted with them, that you will have pity on me, and retrace their origin from the unfortunate night when you was eye-witness of my losses, and saw me plunged into eternal misery, beggary, and despair, and for which I might have perished on the spot, had not your kind and beneficent aid rescued me from immediate death. Your generosity will, I am sure, instigate you to pardon the weakness of my nature; I was led on to the commission of a deed, the history of which I will now inform you of.

"At the period I left you in this place the last time, my mind was very much oppressed with grief; my circumstances being very low, and being greatly involved in debt, I endured the severe pangs of remorse for my conduct with but poor fortitude. The money which you was so good as to furnish me with was barely sufficient to carry me to the place of my destination, at which, when I arrived, I passed my time in the most gloomy and disheartening reflections. My creditors were numerous, and my means of discharging their respective demands but scanty. I could no longer evade them, as they found out the place of my retreat, and threatened me with prison if I did not furnish them with money to discharge their several

bills. What was I to do? I had no means by which I could obtain the least possible relief; I had refused to listen to the voice of reason and the admonitions of my friends, and had scorned any aid in the days of prosperity. My well-wishers I had neglected, and spurned their advice with contemptuous disdain. Alienated then as I was from their affections, and having refused to listen to the maxims of their sincerity, how could I expect assistance from them? What was I then to do? The most violent emotions filled my breast, the most daring acts suggested themselves; my spirits failed; but were soon awakened to a sense of greater desperation. You will shudder at the recital which I am going to give; but no more to temporise.

"Know, then, that on the 17th of last month, when I was walking out in the forest, it being a most beautiful evening, and was ruminating on the state of my affairs, and anticipating with horror the probable consequences that would ensue, I perceived at a distance a chevalier riding unattended on horseback. He was habited like a knight, and a brilliant star reflected on his left side, which denoted him to be of nobility. The accursed deed, with fiend-like spirit, rushed into my mind; my soul was fired, my blood boiled, I was goaded on by distress, and by distress to desperation. I determined to murder and plunder him, but my courage failed; my countenance, which before was marked with a crimson glow, was now fixed in a death-like paleness. Yet no time was to be lost; it was in vain to reason with myself on the atrociousness of the deed. I could not temporise; my spirits, from a true sense of my situation, were fired with more desperation than ever; but again I paused; my courage seemed to fail, and again my steeled soul triumphed."

"I advanced to the stranger with a pistol in my hand, and resolutely demanded his money. He hesitated a moment, but there was no alternative; death would be the fruits of his refusal: he stared at me with a look of wild horror, but which was blended with a strong expression of pity, which cut my soul to the quick. But I persisted in the deed, and the stranger, unarmed, was forced to comply with my abominable demand. He gave me a purse full of gold; but not content with this, I demanded further booty; he then gave me his gold watch and his pocket-book, in which were all the papers which I mean to give you."

Ducld's feelings were now visibly agitated, but conquering himself he proceeded. "After the stranger had left me I was abandoned to the most violent emotions of grief and despair; the spirit of justice assailed my conscience, and I was tortured by the most gloomy and horrid reflections; the stings of my conscience harrowed up my soul, and I burst out into the following exclamation: 'Oh, foul deed! Oh, accursed spirit of vice! not all the powers of heaven and earth can undo it! I awake as if from a dream; I gaze on the horrible action with remorse and agony; but it is too late; it is done, and nothing but retributive justice can do any good; nay, even then it would be too late; the nature of its guilt is beyond the power of art to palliate, or language to defend. I feel its sting with peculiar sharpness. What is wealth and power to the luxury of a good conscience! What is the origin of this scene of baseness? Can I not trace it to that evil propensity for gaming with which my soul was so fatally possessed? Oh, how happy was I when the evil passions slept! Ah! ye scenes of better times, ye are all fled! for ever gone! never more shall I see you! At first I only imbibed a love for play; I never exceeded the common bounds marked by the etiquette of Paris: but this soon led to a higher nature; I followed the spirit of the tables; I frequented them, and by my assiduous attention to them soon obtained a degree of popularity, which elevated my spirits to a far warmer sphere than what they were accustomed to. I was transported with the seeming attention that was universally shown me, and was soon allured by the most wily deceit to follow the spirit of the tables, which ultimately brought on a total ruin of my circumstances, and reduced me from affluence to indigence, and from indigence to acts of the most criminal excess.'

"This was the sort of language I used; my dear friend, when left to myself, and to my miserable reflections; and it is far easier for you to imagine than me to describe my feelings on the iniquitous deed; they are indeed indescribable. Oh! that I had perished on the spot! the world would then have been ridden of a reptile—ah! of a monster—who has invaded the sacred rights of nature, and has trampled on them all, both civil and natural, moral and divine. Oh! that the executioner had been present with the uplifted sword of justice, and had wreaked his vengeance on my guilty and infatuated head! I should not then have been goaded by passion to have committed so foul a deed—a deed at which I not only shudder from its

nature in this world, but its eventual consequences in the next. A frowning heaven and an avenging God have been eye-witnesses of the whole; and will they not visit this my base action? Will they not grant justice to the individual whom I have so basely injured? Ah! not all the repentance and sorrow which mortal can use can wipe away the black stain! my crime is red as crimson, and is indelible. These are thy triumphs, thou genius of gaming; who, disdaining to listen to the voice of reason, and spurning the maxims of nature and sincerity, entailed inevitable destruction, misery, and remorse, on the votaries of thy evil propensities. Thy inglorious exploits will fade away in my presence, and leave me nothing but the pangs and stings of an agonizing conscience, the unaccepted struggle for repentance.

" You little know, my dear friend, the misery which I endure; none can form the least conception of it but those who are forced to endure it! But why mourn? can I charge it on anybody else? and I may at least console myself that I have seduced no amiable youth to follow my iniquitous course.

" I have now, my dear friend, informed you of all which I first endeavoured to conceal from you, but which my feelings and fortitude would not nevertheless let me do; and I believe I have also acquainted you with the state of my mind. Will you pity me? Will you look with the least eye of compassion on me? But can I expect any? I ought to anticipate nothing from you but the severest hatred and the most bitter chagrin; yet our friendship, which has withstood the severest trial and the best test, will, I trust, instigate you to point out the best way to lead me to holy repentance, the boon of pardoning heaven. I will restore you the whole of the money in the fatal purse, and accursed be the gold, and the causes which induced me to obtain it!"

De Gernier was much affected at the mysterious conversation and affecting recital of Monsieur Duclès, and felt the most heartfelt satisfaction in perceiving that the holy torch of religion was lighting the flame of repentance to restore his wounded spirits, and appease his mind. " It is not yet too late," thought De Gernier, " as he is yet susceptible of the impression of virtue, though the images of vice had nearly effaced them. In his earlier days there was a strong conflict which should conquer, virtue or vice; but vice was triumphant, and brought all its fiery legions home to him."

De Gernier gave Duclès all the tender advice which he was capable of affording him, and added, that there was yet time for repentance, for heaven is always ready to receive and bless the transgressor against divine laws; and it was the fatal quickness of sensibility, and the delicate sense of the situation which the unhappy man was in, that urged him to the violent purposes which he finally judged expedient to recruit his finances.

" You may yet obtain repentance, and wipe away the stain of your guilt," said De Gernier.

" You are by far too good, my dear friend," resumed Duclès; " this is more than I deserve, and happy am I that you at least pity me, and deserving as I justly am of shame and hatred, you do not look down on me with such sternness as you ought to do—oh the robber who is now in your presence. I trust a sincere contrition for the past may in some measure efface its guilt. I am now induced to believe that the God of heaven and earth is ready and willing to hear my fervent prayers, which will flow from the impassioned strain of holy contrition.

" In retracing the scenes of my life, my soul is appalled at the dreadful excesses which I have been guilty of. How deceitful is vice! how deluded the sinner! How enticing is the first temptation to resist, which engages all our strength and fortitude. Alas! mine has been weak, and but ill calculated to resist the wily deceit of the individuals in whose society I have mingled, whose principles I have adopted, and by which I have been fatally deceived—ah! eternally ruined. How fascinating, how alluring is the dawn of gaming! it opens as the rising sun of a beautiful day, and gradually gains strength in our mind till it arrives at its meridian power, then sets to our shame and discredit. Ruin and poverty attend it, till the mind is lowered in its own esteem, despised and neglected by all, and even by those who were the first to profess the most zealous and faithful vows of sincerity.

" This gives us manifold occasion to bewail the frailty of man, and to lament the fleeting hours of friendship; and even when those hours are dedicated to the shrine of its god, how often are they dictated by self-interest, the grand and the ruling principle of our nature!

" Were I at this moment to ask any of my former companions, who once styled themselves my friends, for any assistance, would they give it me? No! they would not even look on me

with an eye of compassion ; but would let the following suggestion arise in my mind :—“ Do I deserve the least pity ? Can I expect any from my unexampled baseness ? ”

“ But you, my dear De Gernier, whose mind is fraught with all the generous sensibility of manly capacity, will, I am sure, feel the weight of my feelings, and endeavour to alleviate their burthen, and mitigate their sorrows. How heavily do they oppress me, and how ill calculated am I to support their pressure ! But why repine ? have I not brought it all on by my own vices and pertinacious absurdity, in disdaining to listen to the friendly admonitions of those who had my future welfare at heart ? Ah ! welfare indeed ! would to God that I had followed their advice ! ”

“ Cease to add fresh affliction to your harassed mind, my dear friend,” resumed De Gernier ; “ the deed is done, and the repentance which you have so nobly discovered will wipe away the stain of its guilt. The trial of your strength of mind has been put to the test, and it is found that your powers are not strong enough to resist the force of worldly passions, and withstand the temptation of sensible objects. You are sorry for your weakness, and cordially admit it as a matter of the deepest regret that your fortitude has not been strong enough to conquer the vices inherent in me by nature. I will no longer intrude on your time with this sad topic, but request that you will lay before me the papers you mentioned ; should they prove any part of the property of my family, I shall make the proper use of them ; but, should they prove the contrary, I will return them to you, and think that in that case you had better keep them under lock and key till you may have some opportunity of returning them to the individuals of whom you got them, and thus ease your mind of a material portion of its solicitude, pain, and remorse. But I cannot imagine in what manner the papers can possibly affect the interest of my family.”

“ I beg you will pardon me, my dear friend, if, in my hurry of writing, I said that they belonged to any part of your family ; I meant the Count de Gras, with whom you appeared very intimate, and who was so good as to ask you to his house. If not for his sake, for his beauteous and amiable daughter Mademoiselle Leonora de Gras ”—a sigh escaped him as he uttered these words—“ for I clearly perceived the affectionate partiality and virtuous esteem which she bore for your virtues, when I first had the infinite pleasure (ah ! say mixed with pain) of first meeting her with you at the much esteemed Countess de Santa’s chateau. I was forcibly struck with her loveliness, and was enchanted with her amiable and fascinating manner. But no more to draw your attention from the topic I sent to you about, however painful it is, I repeat to you the error I made with regard to my mentioning that the papers which I have now in my possession belong to any part of your family or yourself. The name of Gras is frequently inserted in them ; and as I have only glanced over them, I have every reason to believe that they are some title-deeds belonging to the count, and for which (should it prove to be the case) I make no doubt he is in great trouble at losing them.”

Here De Gernier became so much exhausted, and his spirits so much agitated, that he fainted away in the arms of his friend. Conviction of the truth carried with it all its energy. When he recovered he fell into the deepest melancholy, and his countenance was sallow and pale. He continued in this state for many hours ; but reviving nature recalled his senses to a consciousness of the circumstances now before him ; he longed to tear open the papers, and see if they were the long-lost treasure of the count ; a treasure which, inestimable as it was to his noble friend, would also be the means of being the consummation of that happiness which he had long fondly anticipated, but which was nevertheless not realized.

The idea that the individual his friend had plundered was the marquis immediately suggested itself, and a few moments’ cool reflection but too truly confirmed it to be the case.

As far as the ultimate consequences of Dueïds’s crime tended to benefit the community at large, and thus do an act of infinite satisfaction to De Gernier in its eventual consequences, it might certainly be gratifying to the wretched Dueïds to reflect, that though the growing exigencies of his finances had forced him to commit the most flagrant act of iniquity, he had nevertheless restored the long-lost property to the Count de Gras ; for the papers which he was going to present to De Gernier were the title-deeds belonging to the Gras estate.

Monsieur Dueïds was very much astonished at the violent emotions which his friend betrayed on his informing him of the facts. No wonder that they operated so forcibly on De Gernier’s mind, for at the very time he was disclosing the most important matters, ah ! reveal-

ing the history of his birth, to the count, he was called away to visit his friend. Now these papers were all he wanted to stamp the final conclusion, and adjust the matters which he was going to suggest to the count for him to adopt, and were the very writings which would restore ease, comfort, and prosperity to the family.

The poor count, who had hitherto been an alien to domestic comfort, who had been exiled from his chateau, and was wandering in the wilds of solitude, would now be carried to the scenes of his former grandeur, where, blessed with the luxury of a good conscience, and the consciousness of having firmly adhered through life to the most upright principles and inflexible integrity, would now receive the precious meed of reward for his past troubles; his former scenes of life would return, perhaps not so gay as before, but his happiness would be more lasting, his enjoyments more sober, and his virtue unshaken.

De Gernier's spirits being now more revived, Duclôs produced the papers, which he found, to his utmost satisfaction, to be the deeds belonging to the Count de Gras; amongst which were many old manuscripts of the Marquis de St Puffet, which would at once be sufficient to expose his baseness, and defeat the ends of his unjustifiable claims, which, from the testimony De Gernier was now enabled to produce, would effectually do it.

It afforded our hero infinite satisfaction that he could thus be of such material service to the count; services which would nevertheless be richly rewarded with the happiness which he had long anticipated, and which at the same time he so justly merited. When he reflected on the manner in which the writings were lost, and the daring manner in which they were recovered, he was amazed; and it appeared no other than an act of Providence that the monster, the Marquis de St Puffet, should fall in the way of Duclôs, and thus be the fatal victim of his dreadful passions.

De Gernier would now be able to make the most comfortable conclusion to the count, which would give a finishing stroke to his history, and thus ease the mind of the count of a considerable portion of the sorrow which would otherwise have attended the recital.

When Duclôs was informed how extensively the writings would contribute to the future happiness of his friend, he shed tears on the bosom of De Gernier, and said, "Happy am I that I have at least some satisfaction, and that my deed, iniquitous as it is, has discovered a spring of vice still more deadly and polluted. Oh! may I, by a sincere repentance and fervent devotion, obtain free pardon, and procure a seat in those blessed realms of eternal bliss, where the souls of the good rest after their flight from this vile and corruptible body. My passions have been indulged to excess, and have fortunately been ultimately productive of the most exquisite good. This gives us clear proof, that though the vicious may sometimes wound the peace of the virtuous, and triumph for a short time, the day when the dissolution of their power shall be completed is at hand, and nothing but retributive justice stare vice in the face, to seal the eternal perdition to which they are doomed by their dark deeds."

De Gernier and Duclôs being more composed, they both took a walk, it being a most beautiful, clear, and mild evening; a refreshing calmness was fixed in the air, as the successor of a sultry warm day.

The first topic of their conversation was on the subject of De Gernier's departure, which he fixed to take place the next day; and hinted his desire to Monsieur Duclôs of walking as far as Paris (for his friend's lodging was half a league from the capital) in order to procure a conveyance to the chateau.

Duclôs appeared very much dejected that his friend was going to leave him so soon, and more particularly at so critical a crisis; but perceiving the necessity of the case, he acquiesced with the desire of De Gernier, and submitted without a murmur.

They now arrived at Paris, and De Gernier having called to see some old friends, soon resumed his walk with Duclôs.

The sun was now on the eve of sinking below the horizon; a saffron glow, blended with a roseate hue, was the unfriendly prelude of its dissolution; presently it was like a ball of fire, then gradually diminishing till it lost itself behind the boundless range of mountains, tinging their towering summits with a golden hue.

De Gernier was vastly pleased with the solemn beauty of the scene. He sat himself under the shade of a tree, and his eyes were fixed on the boundless track of fire which marked the west; he indulged his fancy in the contemplation of the scene till his ideas

gradually arose from terrestrial things to the conception of a Divine Being, and the awful and appalling reflection of eternity.

"How beautiful—how impressive is this scene!" said De Gernier.

"Lovely indeed," rejoined Monsieur Duclôs; "but, I lament to add, not in unison with my feelings; would to God that they were as calm and as composed as is the face of nature now!"

Duclôs's mind was greatly agitated on hearing the distant sound of music, which first was distinctly heard, then seemed to die away on the passing gale. It was the nuns of the convent of St Claire chanting the requiem for the soul of a departed sister. "Perhaps her happy spirit is wafted to better shores, where bliss is without alloy," thought the miserable Duclôs.

The solemn stillness of nature, the languishing softness of the touching music, the chaste grandeur of the silver orb, which hung her bright lamp in the unclouded concave above, conspired to elevate the feelings of Duclôs to that superior level of conception which renders all the vexations and disappointments of this world mean and trifling, when compared with the glory and unmixed happiness that shall be experienced in the blessed regions of eternity.

They had now a most beautiful view of Paris and the river Seine, whose crystal mirror reflected the whole city, a new heaven, and myriads of trembling stars. Its glossy softness and unruffled calmness gave a peculiar effect to the solemnity of the scene; whilst the white tower of P—t was still visible, as the partial beams of the moon reflected on its summit.

The blackest stain which the guilt of crimes can leave on the human mind, was effected on that of Duclôs at this hour; the idea of a judgment to come rose forcibly in his mind, which from principles of gaming was so hardened that all ideas of religion were nearly extinguished, as almost to encourage in his mind the wretched principles of a non-existence of the Deity, a subject on which his friend now attacked him, and soon exposed the fallacy of his atheistical cast, and its wicked tendency.

"In the first place, my dear friend," said De Gernier, "for what end is the vast capacity of the mind intended? Is it designed to be exercised in darkness, and after all to evaporate into nonentity? Does not nature, the seasons, and the blessings which flow for our support, speak the existence of a Deity whom we ought to adore and revere? Let, my dear fellow, a firm consciousness of the knowledge of your Maker, and the true principles of religion, be the guide of your future actions; let them be the foundation of those principles on which the whole engine of existence must turn. If they be weak and unsolid, how can it work? Disorder attends its work, and inevitable destruction follows. But why is the world crowded with vain and wicked men—with factious and ambitious leaders—with publishers of sedition, advocates for dissipation, and panders of seduction? Why is the civil list crowded with malefactors, prisons with criminals, or gibbets loaded with murderers? Because they have not made religion the basis of their principles. Religion, in its true nature and real meaning, does not instigate men to be harsh and severe; nor does it palliate enthusiasm, so as to admit it. It is dictated in a mild and compassionate strain, inspires the holy tenet of "do unto others as you would they should do unto you;" like all people as well as yourself; and never think your time ill bestowed in any charitable deed, or wasted in listening to the simple annals of the poor, and the suppliant pauper. It cultivates a general good amongst all; makes man sociable to man; reforms our wild and loose principles; teaches us to assist each other, and correct as much as in us lies our mutual frailties and human imperfections. Let us always own the infinite good of the sovereign disposer of all human events, and never be cold and remiss in our prayers of thanksgiving to him for his multiplied mercies to the sons of men and in pouring forth our most fervent thanks for the good and the manifold blessings which he has universally scattered amongst us. The Lord is compassionate to all and full of mercy; he will not shut his ears to the petitions of the beggar, or desert the widow in the period of distress. Let also charity, my dear fellow, constantly engage your attention; what little you can spare, let it be employed in the service of that noble virtue. All men have it in their power, from the prince to the peasant, of doing good at certain seasons, if they will but exercise the period which offers itself in a multiplicity of forms. Why are all our streets crowded with idle vagrants? Are we, because a poor man, lame, deserted, and fatigued by toil, supplicates our aid, to turn away from him with disgust, and reject his petitions with contemptuous disdain? No! religion never implies that. The unpitied sorrows of poverty, the furrowed wrinkles of age and its

infirmities, have an ample claim on our benevolence and attention. It is really inconceivable the pleasure which the virtuous man experiences after having done a good action; the more he does, the more he wishes to do. I well know, my dear fellow, that your mind is susceptible of the finest impression of virtue; but the *Læthean* torpor which your ill-fated intercourse with that vile *Pandæmonium* of reptiles has produced, has steeped your senses into a total oblivion of the misery you are entailing on yourself; it has denied you the power of discrimination, as to the moral tendency of anything which you have pursued; has corrupted your sentiments, perverted your talents, and absorbed your mind. In short, you have exchanged good for bad, virtue for vice; and why this miserable infatuation? Is this the end of religion? Were the young minds of our ancestors nourished in vice, and fostered in iniquity? Is wickedness to be our creed? Are we to deny the existence of good for that of bad? Impossible! Ah! abandoned generation!—ah! wretched depravity! Oh! had you not been seduced from the path of virtue by that d—d crew of gamesters, who first flattered, then ruined, and now despise you, all would now have been well. And see you not the conviction of this truth? Does it not carry it on its very face? Oh! indeed it does; it is too plain, open, and notorious to require any arguments to strengthen its veracity. How quiet, how generous, how instructive, how pleasing, how amiable, and how truly enviable are the manners of the really religious divine! With what safety can we rely on what he says! No mean or corrupt principles engage his attention; no wrangling sophistry or insidious duplicity mark his conduct; his enemies may rely on his candour, inasmuch as his friends find in him the repository of their confidence, and the guardian of all their moral principles. But still, anxious as I am to impress on your mind the highest sense of respect for the clergy, I must caution you against that blind veneration which fixes in the same admiration their merits and their demerits. Experience has fatally evinced to many, that bad and good are invariably mixed; indeed, were it not so, emulation for virtue would cease to have its wonted energy."

Duclès appeared quite convinced by the arguments of his friend; and his mind, which had lately lived in darkness, now burst forth into light ineffable. When he began to reason with himself he soon perceived the fallacy of those principles which had lately regulated his mind, and the increased guilt of those who encouraged him to entertain such criminal principles. The guilt of his crime now appeared to him in the strongest light, which he viewed with fear, but which was blended with those hopes of forgiveness which his friend had been so anxious to instil into his mind; for the Lord is always both willing and anxious to receive the penitent sinner with open arms.

The shades of twilight were thickening, and it was quite dark ere De Gernier and Duclès reached home; but the rays of the moon lighted the way, and induced them (added to the mildness of the night, and the balmy sweetness of the air) to prolong the hours of their walk.

Duclès appeared, upon the whole, much comforted by the conversation, and determined, should his guilt be effaced, and existence continued, to follow those good and just rules which his friend so assiduously laid down for his welfare.

Man is at all times a most impotent being, and dependent on a thousand circumstances for the pleasures and zest of this life; the victim of habit, and the child of custom, sorrow, vanity, and vexation; and withal misery generally crowns his exploits. Always murmuring at our stern fate, and ever thinking ourselves the most wretched of all beings in the creation, sometimes our spirits are buoyed up to a sense of intellectual happiness, when health and prosperity shine, when grandeur dazzles, and luxury's giddy throng can be assembled without pain or difficulty; when worldly affairs glide gently along, and nothing intervenes to damp the glow of our heated imagination, or check the rising progress of fancied bliss, we may be comparatively happy; but, should adversity and sickness attend us, how weak and helpless would be our state, and how factious and noisy should we be in our complaints, without once reflecting on the causes which brought on adversity!

De Gernier's mind was expanded; firm, noble, and well informed, he could meet misfortune unappalled, and find pleasure in that solitude where others would have languished in obscurity and perished in despair.

They both reached the place of their destination, and De Gernier having materially composed the mind of his friend, informed him that he must through necessity leave him the next morning. He comforted him by saying, that he would adjust all with the marquis, or at

least give him an opportunity of confessing his guilt. Duclôs was rather more composed, but the sense of his guilt made a strong impression on his feelings; the monitor within would not let him sleep in peace, but forced his conscience to do penance. He was most fully aware of the enormity of the crime, and determined at first to give himself up, together with the papers, to the court of justice; but the singular manner in which the title-deeds affected the interest of De Gernier's friends instigated him to give them to his friend, in hopes of benefiting the family, and also making the acknowledgment of that crime which he was so anxious to do.

Duclôs, now perfectly resigned to the intended departure of his friend, appeared much satisfied with having confessed his crime, and given up the papers to De Gernier, and resolved for the remaining part of his existence to pass his time in prayer, in hopes of wiping away the black hue of his guilt, and obtaining salvation in the world to come.

The advice of his friend was ever present in his thoughts, and he resolved to follow its dictates with fidelity, and obtain comfort at least by leading a good life, from experience of a bad one, and also by fulfilling the requests of the most inviolable sincerity.

CHAPTER VII.

*"And now the orient sky
Glowed with the ruddy morning."*—MARC.

DE GERNIER having effected all which art could suggest, or ingenuity afford, to soothe the drooping spirits of Monsieur Duclôs, took his departure early the ensuing morning, which gave heartfelt sorrow and increased anguish to the feelings of his unfortunate friend. That friend, the only friend in whom he could repose the secrets of his heart, was now going to leave him to himself, and to his painful reflections, replete with agonizing remorse and pitiless despair.

De Gernier now set forth on his eventful journey.

His heart was full of joy in the inexpressible satisfaction he should experience in delivering up the papers to the venerable count; yet, should he interrogate him on the manner by which he became possessed of them, the miserable and unfortunate reply which by honour he would be forced to give, would materially damp the glow of joy, and efface its expression from the united looks of Leonora and her father.

The poor count would feel deeply and sensibly for the miserable Duclôs; he would pardon the weakness of his nature, and pity at the same time the fatal error of youthful passions heated by distress.

Yet, to insure unbounded pleasure on both sides, De Gernier was contriving some scheme by which he might conceal from the count the miserable depravity of his friend; but his ingenuity was insufficient to invent a story plausible enough to blind the judgment of maturer years; he wished to lay before him the whole of the facts, and his delicate sense of honour prompted him to disdain the idea of concealing any portion of the circumstances from his worthy host; for he must certainly, if not now, thought De Gernier, sooner or later, be informed of all; and why, then, for a short period of ignorance increase the horrible suspense, and add fresh misery to the perpetrator of the crime? No; he was determined to lay before the count the whole detail of the facts, but would nevertheless take especial care to soften the rigour of that judgment which the worthy man would necessarily make; for how could he pardon weakness which was foreign to his mind? No; but his dignified firmness would instigate him to bewail the errors of youth, and teach him to give those valuable truths which were ever the first in his mind; for, thought he, the count has been ever anxious to impress on the minds of all, that the gay images which youthful imagination forms of mankind, and the flattering light in which it pourtrays them, when the mark of delusion is unveiled, experience awfully evinces that rectitude is inseparable from virtue, and alone guides us to the temple of bliss.

In his solitude he often reflected on the gay scenes of the world, its palled pleasures, tasteless enjoyments, and unsatisfactory delights; but withal he pitied, rather than rebuked mankind. He was always willing, as far as his abilities enabled him, to enlighten the benighted mind, and to impress on it the pure principles of religion, and to encourage the pleasures of domestic amusements. He was a friend of solitude, and spurned the crowded intercourse of life; he liked a religious seclusion, with a few choice friends on whose integrity, bounty, and

sincerity he might rely ; where he could form the most unprejudiced portraits of mankind, and unfold the intricacies of nature with an intuitive clearness and commendable rapidity.

It was now drawing on to dusk ere the hero reached the village of Manville ; the sober grey was rapidly deepening its shadows, and the lurid sky was tinged with a sulphureous hue, the awful prelude of the approaching storm.

The portentous appearance of the heavens alarmed De Gernier, as he had to cross a forest about three leagues from the cottage of the Count de Gras.

Distant thunder was heard, and was reverberated by the mountains. It now rolled in distant peals on the heavy air ; the big clouds moved heavily along, till at length they discharged themselves in rain, which pelted down in torrents ; the wind sighed mournfully, vivid flashes of lightning illumined the black recesses of the mountains, whilst long and rumbling peals of thunder served only to increase the horror of the scene.

Our hero was now in the midst of the forest, and while he shivered in the blast, he thought he heard the distant cry of a female in distress. Now he imagined he heard it plainer, then it seemed to die away in the air.

The storm still continued, the forked lightning discovered the pathless sods of the bye-roads, and the awful thunder seemed the watch-word of death to all around.

De Gernier was greatly alarmed, for never did he witness so dreadful a tempest ; but his feelings were soon appeased, for the battling elements ceased to wage war, and their fury no longer raged uncontrolled. The dark and desolate scene appeared still more awful ; a scathed larch, and a blasted oak, which had borne many a winter's heavy siege, laid their naked branches prostrate on the ground ; and the umbrageous beech, which had long flourished as the lord of the forest, laid low its crested pride.

A solemn calm succeeded, which was terrific in darkness, and heightened the fears of De Gernier, lest he should lose his way, as he was not accustomed to travel that road.

But, fortunately for him, the clouds disappeared, and the moon ascended the horizon in full brilliancy.

Not the slightest vestige of humanity could be traced in the wilds of this lonely forest ; every species of mankind and cultivation slept in the dust ; not a soul appeared for miles ; the country around seemed uninhabited, which, owing to the wars and to the want of population, caused this dreary aspect.

De Gernier proceeded on with hopeless grief, and pursued his weary toil till impatience yielded to fear ; and he was going to sink under the fatigue, disappointment, and distress which he experienced, when a faint glimmering light re-animated his spirits, and brightened up his countenance with joy.

He pursued the light, passing over with heedless unconcern the waving blackness of the forest, the mournful sighings of the wind, and the dreadful howlings of the wild beasts.

He kept on till he at length arrived at the house from whence the light issued, and it proved to be the inn of the village, which was about half a league from the cottage of the Count de Gras.

Being once more in the high road, he forgot the horrors of the forest, and pursued his journey with a lighter heart ; and his spirits alternately were revived by the transporting anticipation that he was so near the tender object of his solicitude, and hurried on by the most enthusiastic delights that he was the messenger of such good tidings to the venerable count.

It was not long before he came in sight of the white gate, which a gleam of the moonbeams plainly discovered. He was soon at the door.

He heard the church clock beat the midnight hour ; he rung the bell, but nobody answered it ; he rung it still louder, which made noise enough to awaken the spirits of the dead.

At length poor old Peter, half dead with fear, his night-cap on his head, his body enveloped in an old flannel gown, a glimmering taper in his hand, and his countenance white with amazement, trembling from head to foot, slowly advanced to answer the untimely summons. Having unbolted the door, his astonishment was agreeably abated in finding that the stranger who intruded on them in the dead of the night was Monsieur de Gernier.

"Ah ! is it you, your honour ?" said the faithful domestic. "I beg your pardon for not coming before, but it was my master's orders not to let anybody in the cottage except you during his absence."

"His absence!" exclaimed De Gernier, petrified with astonishment; "why, where is he gone?"

"He is gone, your honour, to visit his old family mansion, the Marquis de Saint Puffet, the present possessor of it, being in Paris, and not expected home for these two months."

"Ah! too good! too sensible man! he little knows that what he is gone to see will be in a short time replaced in his hands! And the Marquis de Saint Puffet gone to Paris!—and for two months!—this is strange indeed. Ab! Duclos, your fate is hard."

"What is that, my lord?" replied Peter.

"Have peace, my good fellow," resumed De Gernier; "and, no longer to detain you, go to bed again, and never mind me, for I can easily find my own room, and I will set out the next morning for the family mansion."

"But won't you have anything, your honour, after your long ride?" rejoined Peter. "You had better take something before you go to bed; it might remove any cold which you might possibly catch, as I presume your honour was out in all the heavy tempest, which greatly alarmed us a few hours ago."

"I will take nothing, I thank you, Peter," replied De Gernier; "and I make no doubt that I shall rise in the morning without perceiving any ill effects from my journey."

When De Gernier got into bed, the state of his mind was very fluctuating, as his ideas alternately rolled on the subject of the count's departure from the cottage, to visit the family mansion.

He wished to go himself, but his ignorance of the situation of the place, and his fears of asking anybody concerning it, lest by so doing he should betray any of the circumstances of the title-deeds belonging to the estate, deprived him of the power of making any inquiries concerning the situation; but he was cheered by the hope, that, added to the knowledge which old Peter had of it, and the inquiries he could make, he should be soon able to trace with safety, and with little difficulty, the route which the count took.

His mind being more composed, it once more slumbered into rest, and gave him a kind though temporary relief to all his troubles and his toils.

He arose early the next morning, and the dawn of day softened the romantic beauty of the cottage.

Far to the east appeared the rising orb, struggling for life amidst a host of fleecy clouds that shaded the horizon, which now began to blush, then to redden, and the glorious sun emerged from darkness in all the splendour of the east. The summits of the distant mountains, which were fringed with willow and ash, were shaded with a roseate hue.

He contemplated the surrounding scenery with all the energy of rapturous ecstasy.

De Gernier, who was a friend to the wild beauties of nature, took infinite satisfaction in the view of a morning's dawn.

He seated himself on a bank, where the distant rumbling of a limpid stream, which stole along the valley below, lulled his senses into that placid kind of melancholy which softens the ruder passions of our nature, mellows the afflictions of this life, and breathes a hallowed influence on all around.

He perceived at a distance the bower made by the hands of Leonora, to which he also assisted. He reflected on the many pleasant hours which he had passed with her under its shade, and regretted that its dear mistress was so far away from him.

None but those who really feel them can tell the anxious moments of love, when its object is estranged from us, and its accompanying hesitative uncertainty. The possibility that the affection of Leonora might be diminished, and that some rival might start up, at once to wound his feelings and torture his love, presented itself to his perturbed imagination; but the sacred charm of his passion softly chid him for indulging so dishonourable an idea. The eternal fidelity which Leonora so often plighted to his unalterable affection, the tones of her voice when she bade him farewell, the tears she shed when he pressed her hand to his lips, were too notorious, and spoke a language which could not be mistaken.

Leonora's mind was above the worthless practices of insidious deceit; she respected the honour of that love which she bore to De Gernier too much to barter it away, or to place her affections on him whose merits, if tried, could not bear the test which those of her lover's did.

De Gernier sat on this mossy bank, indulging in that pensive melancholy which was so strongly marked on his countenance.

He gazed on the rustic simplicity of the cottage, the verdant hue of the velvet carpet, the crystal clearness of the limpid stream, and the solemn grandeur of the wild mountains which reared their towering summits far above a romantic little wood, which swept down close to the base of the rocks. The brightness of the chestnut, and the solemn shade of the larch, pine, and cypress, pleased him greatly; the stern features of the aged oak formed a good contrast to the weeping grace of the willow, and the waving lightness of the poplar.

The house sailed in humble simplicity in the centre of an amphitheatre in the wood, the walks in which were truly beautiful and romantic, adding to the picturesque scenery around. The placid streams, after winding through the verdant meadows, discharged themselves into a small basin, which being crowded with rocky flints caused a white froth that formed a beautiful contrast with the dark shade of green which marked the pine.

The air was solemnly still; the bell at a distant convent was distinctly heard; all was quiet save the dashing murmur which rolled along unheeded below.

"How beautiful is this scene! how deep this tranquillity," exclaimed De Gernier. "Would to God that all those whose minds are abstracted from the beauties of nature by worldly affairs, and a mean cupidity after gain and ambition—all those who are tired with business, hackneyed by its toils, and maddened by its losses, could taste the choice beauties of this scene! how readily would they wish to steal away from the crowded troubles of the world, its sad vicissitudes, and unsatisfactory charms. How pleasing would be the change! how different the contrast! they would cease to trouble themselves with the hurry of business, the flattery of interest, and the gain of trade: they would all fondly wish to emerge from the vortex of trouble, care, and dissipation, to be wafted o'er the shores of retirement, and carried to the valley of unstudied nature, where are happiness unalloyed, pleasure unlimited, and health unblemished. How soft, how calm, how endearing are the hours of solitude! how strongly do I now feel its charms! what a difference does this scene afford to that which I experienced whilst walking with Duclôe in Paris! In the one I saw all hurry, business, dissipation, and confusion; in this are quiet, ease, pleasure, and regularity."

"How many have been the arguments on the subject of the pleasures of public life in comparison with those of retirement; but argued as the subject is, and may continue so to be, it is both inexhaustible and unlimited in its end; that is to say, it is impossible to form any judgment between the two; for all human perfections have their accompanying imperfections; and were all the world to live in solitude and retirement, how could we assist each other's wants? who could fill the offices of the state, instruct the poor, fight our battles, soldier our army, and man our navy? That all, therefore, should be inseparable from solitude will, on a more mature consideration, be found perfectly absurd, and quite impracticable."

"When it was asserted, that all men, from the highest to the lowest, feel the dignity of retirement, it was applicable to those whose situation in life is not dependent on their daily exertion for support, whose time is their own, and are free of worldly embarrassments arising from business. Those men who are independent, and who pass their time in the depths of giddy society, in vanity, licentiousness, and extravagance, are little sensible of the incomparable, the truly imitable beauties of retirement. How often in the gay scenes of the world, in the fashionable intercourse of the most distinguished societies, is the affection of the heart distorted, and all that can enoble or adorn the character of man is exchanged for the tyranny of fashion and the effeminacy of luxury! how the tyrant reigns when once he is permitted to rule! his power is then uncontrolled, and he governs with unlimited authority and despotic sway. But it is time to return to the cottage; I have been idling away many hours, and have far to travel."

De Gernier heard the clock strike, and was pleased to find that it only beat the ninth hour. The weather was intensely hot; not a breeze agitated the calm unruffled surface of the water; it was smooth as glass: the trees were motionless, the forest tops beat their heads mournfully forward, and the weeping birches, which shaded the cottage, hung down their pendent foliage in token of friendly sorrow.

Every external object was congenial with the sentiments of De Gernier; quite in unison,

with his innate feelings ; the charms of the cottage seemed more endearing than ever, for the happy remembrance of the amiable Leonora, the tender looks and half uttered sentences, the broken sighs which escaped her, were now called into remembrance ; he commented upon them all, and they made her exist in his presence, and served to dispel the gloom of the reflecting hour.

The real causes which instigated the Count de Gras to visit the family mansion were as yet unknown to De Gernier ; and the peculiar situation in which he was placed denied him the power of making any inquiries concerning it, lest it should betray the knowledge of his having the immediate possession of the title-deeds belonging to the estate.

He did not like, upon consideration, to inquire of old Peter, as perhaps his rustic stupidity would lead him into error and convey him astray.

De Gernier, bent upon following the count, determined at all events to repair to the village which was near the chateau, in full hopes of being then able to gain the necessary intelligence for the happy completion of his journey.

Poor old Peter, the trusty servant who was left to take care of the cottage, prepared every thing for the departure of our hero.

All being arranged, he sat out on his eventful journey in search of the count and Leonora, who had taken refuge in the chateau of their legal domain.

VOLUME II.—CHAPTER I.

" What havoc hast thou made, foul monster, sin !
Greatest and first of ills ! the fruitful parent
Of woes of all dimensions ! But for thee,
Sorrow had never been."—BLAISE.

LEAVING the adventurous hero in search of the count and the beauteous fair one, we now return to explain the mystery attending Henry (the son of the dame), who was benighted in the forest, and who met with two strangers.

One of these strangers proved to be the Marquis de St Puffet, who had enticed a virgin into the forest, and was seeking her to comply with his importunate request in marriage, by vainly representing to her the happiness which she would enjoy at his chateau, and the constant affection and fidelity which he would discover towards her.

To give our readers some knowledge how the fair one became acquainted with the gay Marquis de St Puffet, it is requisite to mention, that this damsel, whose name was Agnes, had been brought up from her earliest infancy in the convent of St Claire.

She had frequently been solicited by the woman who attended her, by order of the Marquis de St Puffet, to reveal some slight facts respecting her birth, and how she came to be placed in the convent of St Claire.

The poor girl manifested to all her unwillingness to acquaint them with what she knew concerning her parentage and birth.

All that could be obtained from her was, that she perfectly remembered having been educated and nourished in the convent from her earliest infancy. She said that she never was invested with the order of the nuns, and never did the consequent penance, but that she was placed there under the protection of the lady abbess, and might be taken away at pleasure without any order from the pope.

The manner by which the marquis became acquainted with Agnes was through the means of the lady abbess, who was distantly related to him ; and having occasion to pay his respects to her on some particular business, he saw the lovely and enchanting Agnes.

From the first sight of her, his soul was touched to the quick, his imagination was heated, his spirits fired, and he was no longer himself ; indeed so violent was his passion, that he could scarcely contain himself, and he determined, in despite of blood, power, or expense, to gain her person, if not her affections.

For this purpose he bribed the old gardener of the convent to give Agnes a letter, which was couched in the following terms —

"The Marquis de St Puffet to Mademoiselle Agnes."

"Most adorable fair one!—

"Pardon this presumption for intruding on your time, and wasting it in reading the lines of him who is forced to make an ample confession of those feelings which he wants' power to control. From my first sight of your beauty and singularly interesting manners, I was forcibly struck, astonished, and enchanted, and I resolved from that hour to acquaint you with the state of my mind. If you can feel any sympathy for my distress, and, as beauty was never without humanity, have pity on me and attend to my suggestion. I have bribed Carlo, the gardener; he will open the gates of the convent for you, and in a few minutes you will be clasped in the arms of your sacredly devoted lover, and borne away in triumph to happier mansions, where, secured from envy and malevolence, you shall taste all the unmixed happiness which can issue from the affection of him who adores and loves you to madness. Send me a reply by Carlo, and whilst buoyed up by hopes and fears, and in the anxious moments of hesitative uncertainty, permit me to subscribe myself,

"Your eternally devoted lover,

"L. B. DE ST PUFFET."

This letter was delivered to the gardener, who took the first opportunity of giving it to Agnes.

At first she would not receive it, but eager curiosity soon triumphed over the delicacy of modesty; her countenance all the evening was changed, sometimes red as fire, and then pale as death.

The abbess eagerly inquired why her countenance looked so altered, which question she evaded as much as she could.

Her changed looks could not be concealed from the deep penetrating eyes of the mother abbess, who, having known life in other forms than that of the station that she now occupied, soon discovered that the pallid countenance of Agnes did not arise from indisposition, but from some other source, the spring of which she endeavoured vainly to trace.

Agnes was in terrible anxiety about the epistle which the marquis sent her.

The abbess asked her many questions, in a manner which she had not been used to, which consequently greatly hurt and alarmed Agnes; but it was the duty of the superior to watch over the happiness, and guard the child committed to her care from the snares of seduction, and the thoughts of the splendidly miserable world.

Agnes was most impatient to read the billet, but was forced to subdue her eager curiosity; for circumstances so placed her, that she had no convenient opportunity of indulging the gratification of her desire till she retired to bed.

Agnes had during her confinement ever complained of its languor and ennui, and wished to steal from the dull and tasteless monotony of the convent, to mix in the gay intercourse of life. She had pourtrayed their pleasures in the most flattering images, which were not perhaps the less glowing and happy because they were imaginary, and the less lasting because they were ideal; but soon would experience teach her to correct the extravagant picture which her juvenile fancy had formed of life.

The sacred pleasures, the dignified elevation, and the fervent devotion of the cloister were to her painful and unsatisfactory; she could see nothing but misery in its simple pleasures, and nothing but vanity and vexation in all its monotonous routine. The dull chiming for vespers was most grating to her feelings; she had long wished to steal away from the convent, and the present was a most inviting opportunity; but when the time arrived when she could put into play what she long ardently wished, her mind shuddered at the iniquity of the action.

Agnes now retired to bed. On breaking open the seal, and reading the contents of the epistle, which were little less than what she expected upon the whole, she wept tears over its contents, and resolved to deliver it up to the lady abbess, as the most effectual manner to preserve her chastity unblemished, her honour untainted, and her conscience unspotted. But the idea of bringing that man into trouble, who appeared externally to pay her such attention, made her desist, and forced her to relinquish those ideas, which she at first determined to put into action; but she determined at all events to write to him, lamenting her incapability of being sensible of the honour and singular attention which the marquis showed her; and to

express to him in clear terms her utter unwillingness to follow any of his plans, or to comply in the least with any of his unseasonable and untimely requests.

Poor Agnes's mind was in the most pitiable state imaginable ; for that which she had long anxiously anticipated might now be exercised, and which, having a great superiority over her juvenile feelings, taught her almost in some degree to acquiesce with the sentiments of the marquis. But modesty, the most delicate modesty, shuddered at the idea of quitting the abbess, to join herself with a man who was an utter stranger to her, and whom she had never seen but once, but had nevertheless heard his name remotely introduced in conversation with the lady abbess.

Agnes also thought that her guardian mother suspected her of some clandestine correspondence with somebody, which at once induced her not to write ; as, were it to gain the ears of the superior, it would at once blast her fame, ruin her reputation, and sink her into nothing.

She might now act if she wished in unison with her own genuine feelings ; but when the matter came to be urged, her enterprising spirit sunk beneath the extent of its work, and became appalled in the midst of its difficulties.

That which is likely to be ultimately productive of misery, shame, and remorse, and carries the conviction of iniquity on its very face, is sure to be denied by a virtuous and good mind ; it may cultivate for a time a temporary happiness ; but the time will come when reason will scare that imaginary bliss from the mind, and lead it to the path of permanent comfort. For those who indulge in worldly luxury, but little think the expense they are incurring, and conscience which they are troubling.

Agnes determined to ease her mind of a portion of its anxiety by writing an answer to the marquis the ensuing morning.

She passed a most restless night, her mind being haunted by the spectre of the marquis, upbraiding her for not complying with his request. Aerial phantoms of bliss presented themselves to her imagination ; the pomp of the nuptials was displayed, and the external pleasure and happiness arising from the union largely expressed.

Her mind wandered to periods as yet far distant. She fancied herself the mother of a beautiful and smiling family, all eager and crawling upon her lap, to share the envied kiss, and divide the kind, the affectionate, the endearing look.

The marquis, during all this time, was in the most dreadful state of suspense ; for, waiting in vain for her reply, he at last obtained admission to the gardener, and inquired if he had delivered the billet safe ; who replying in the affirmative, materially increased the anguish, and also the anxiety, of the marquis.

“ Perhaps,” thought the impassioned, the distracted lover, “ she despairs my proffered vows of eternal fidelity and unalterable affection ; her mind is perhaps too much fraught with the blindness of corrupt superstition to listen to the voice of reason and of love ; but if I do not hear from her soon, I will try some other expedient. I will not be trifled with, for she shall be mine ; I will bribe some men to carry her off in the dead of the night, which can be very easily done by means of old Carlo, the gardener, whose interest and support I have. If it was not for him, I should do no good ; therefore, to ensure success, I must add fresh bribes ; and I well know that the generality of mankind are too prone to corruption and temptation to refuse a liberal and independent sum ; for where a man can make his fortune, and at once free himself from the slavery of trade, the bondage of work, and the drudgery of service, his mind is not strong enough to refuse it ; and a host of toils are exchanged for a few stings and pinches of the conscience.”

The marquis, whose mind was quick to form schemes, zealous in executing them, penetrating in his discoveries, and quick in sensibility, would not let any trifling difficulty appal him, for he was determined to surmount them of the greatest magnitude ; and whilst goaded on by the sting of the tender object which of all others he now held the most dear on earth, he was resolved to sacrifice all at the shrine of his ungovernable passion, which stormed in his breast with such irresistible fury.

He had great interest ; he could command the assistance of all the lower orders ; an aid which they would afford him more through fear than personal esteem. He was lord paramount over all, and what he could not procure by legal right, he ever obtained by the most unwarrantable force, which he also resolved to do in the present case.

But the marquis thought that the rustic girl could not be so blind to the temptation of pomp, love, grandeur, and parade, as to resist it. He harboured in his own mind the idea of certain victory, and was much astonished at not having a reply to the *billet-doux* he sent her by Carlo the gardener.

This hurt his pride, and wounded his lordly and self-sufficient ideas.

He who had been accustomed all his life to a mechanical submission and systematical obedience to everything which he said or wished to have done, could but ill brook the idea of a refusal, or coldness in complying with his request.

In order to show our readers the light in which poor Agnes held the base marquis the following billet will amply serve, which she gave to the gardener to deliver immediately to the marquis.

"Mademoiselle Agnes to the Marquis de St Puff."

"SIR.—Your note of the other day surprised and hurt my feelings more than I can easily describe. But to keep you in ignorance of the state of my mind, which might possibly teach you to cultivate a sense of my submission to your wishes, which I now solemnly swear in the negative, I have taken advantage of this opportunity to acquaint you of my unwillingness in complying with any of your strange requests. I am duly sensible of the honour and kindness you have intended me; but do you suppose that I could escape from these holy iron gates unnoticed? And even if I could, can you imagine for one moment that it would be to indulge the sensual gratification of a man who is an utter stranger to me? Reflect on the measures which you have taken, and you will be amazed at your strange infatuation; reason in your more sober hours will chide your rash measures, and severely rebuke you for aiming at the destruction of a poor girl, who is in the first place unworthy of your affection, which if sincere is painful, and if false is criminal; and, in the next, a union would only be productive of the most poignant remorse, and the severest pangs of conscience. I trust that you will no longer intrude on my time, or wound my feelings by your proffered vows, which, flattered as I may be, I can never accept them; and have only to add, that you have my full pardon for the measures you have taken, and my best wishes for success in some other quarter.

"Yours, &c. AGNES."

When the marquis had finished reading this epistle his soul was touched with the most convulsive pangs; he raved like a madman, and in vain did he try to control his feelings, for nature would triumph despite of reason.

His mind, which had been worked up to the highest pitch, and encouraged to entertain a sense of success, which his vain imagination had pictured to himself would certainly be effected, was now greatly disappointed.

He mused on the epistle of Agnes, and his soul was cut to the quick by the lines which it contained. He first praised, then condemned her, and lastly swore to taste sweet revenge. Vain, haughty, presuming, and authoritative in his manner, and preeminent in his tone, he sought a calendar of expedients to invent the best plot to secure the person of Agnes; for, since he could not gain her affections by love and gentle persuasion, he was resolved to arrest her person by force. Time would mellow the rigour of her hatred for the measures, which he was afraid would be those confined to harsh authority.

The marquis, in the heat of his reflections, exclaimed, "Surely her heart cannot be insensible to the charms of beauty, the grace of manner, the splendour of title, the wealth of estates, or the strength of power!"

The marquis being naturally vain, and singularly addicted to egotism, it ceases to be a wonder that he praised his own beauty; for to do him justice, he was one of the most comely, fashionable, and insinuating men of the age. Grace shaped his fine and manly limbs, and beauty decked his inimitably formed countenance; and he added to a more exquisite regularity of features the most pleasing, fascinating, and courteous manners, and a truly noble and dignified address. He could support the character of the prince and peasant, the divine and the rake. Where self-interest engaged his attention, he was dauntless; no difficulty obstructed his passage, and no obstacle surmounted him. He was courteous to the ladies, submissive to his superiors, a tyrant to his inferiors, assiduous in gaming, and zealous in performing his military duties. He was a fine officer in the field, and most singularly calculated to show the pompous splendour of a martial parade; noble, commanding, imperious, and strict, he impressed

all with a reverential awe; he would have the duty done in a strict and soldier-like manner; he used great freedom with the officers, and flattered those with attention who were likely hereafter to benefit him, or in the least aid his ambitious prospects.

But his quick sensibility of honour was frequently blunted by a mean cupidity after gain, and his avidity of lucre often defeated the ends of rectitude; and where bribery could raise the listless head of sleeping justice and rigid principles, he constantly did it. His insinuating plausibility and persuasive eloquence were calculated to warp the mind of the most upright man from the path of virtue. He stopped at no trivial impediment in the completion of his wishes; he would brook no refusal. Fortune and nature favoured his inordinate ambition, his remorseless tyranny, vindictive spirit, and gross sensuality. He was never oppressed with the languor of dissipation; he added to the most effeminate principles, and debauched conduct, an open and active mind. His abilities were not mean, and he eminently discovered his talent as a soldier, and his capacity as a magistrate. He treated those whom he despised as worthless and useless members with inconceivable rigour; and he neither lost anything in dignity of form, in penetrations of countenance, deep discrimination, and sullen watchfulness; he was quick to feel, and vindictive in the most extreme degree.

No religion guided his political and his private life, for he was an atheist. His moral character was as despicable as his public character was useless; he was factious, noisy, and fastidious, never contented with anything, and ever aiming at making some new disturbance, to show his popularity and increase its strength. In short, dissipation palsied his mind, corruption corroded his heart, and atheism deadened his soul.

To gain the purpose of the lovely Agnes, was what he now aimed at; and for this purpose he bribed the gardener to administer a sleeping potion to her; which he could very easily do, as she frequently came to him in the garden for a glass of water. After she should have swallowed the soporific draught, a dull stupidity would seize her, she would fall into fits, and remain in a perfect state of insensibility for eight-and-forty hours; which time having elapsed, she would rise as if from a single night's sleep quite recovered, and without the least knowledge of having had so long and so unnatural a sleep.

He ordered Carlo to his mansion, and gave him the fatal draught, telling him exactly how much to administer, and was comfortably assured by the infernal agent of his iniquitous schemes of certain success, as he could easily effect it, for the lady abbess constantly gave Agnes leave to walk in the garden, and she was sure to ask him for a glass of cold spring water; and thus he had ample space to effect his diabolical schemes.

The marquis, in order to secure the best and the most indefatigable wishes of the old gardener, informed him, that on the event of the whole of the plans turning out to his utmost satisfaction, and should he after the escape of Agnes be expelled from the convent upon suspicion of having effected it or connived at it, the marquis promised to allow him an annuity to maintain himself all his life, as a reward for his services, and a compensation for the loss of his place; indeed, should he not be suspected, he was still to be liberally rewarded.

The marquis having given all his orders to the gardener, and to the exact completion of those wishes which he enjoined him to do, gave him the white powder, which would steep poor Agnes's senses into forgetfulness of the person who gave it her, and of the guilt which covered the iniquitous act.

Carlo now proceeded on his fatal and adventurous task.

Agnes came as usual to walk in the garden; it was a beautiful day, and she had not been out long before she went to the bower, the sun being very warm. This sweet retreat fronted the west, and often did she retire there in the cool of the evening, and pass her time in the most sublime contemplation and elevated devotion. She frequently gazed on the gothic architecture of the convent, and its grey walls appeared like sober masses of religion; sanctity and delicacy marked its gates. Often did she listen to the melancholy chiming of the vespers, and her heart was shrouded in gloom as the clock in-slew and solemn note, as they languidly passed away, beat the revolving hours.

It afforded her peculiar pleasure and satisfaction to watch the grand luminary of the day, bend his course to his final journey, where, fatigued by toil, he sunk into the lower world, throwing his crimson mantle all over the boundless horizon.

The solemn stillness of the evenings, the melancholy sound of distant music which some-

times floated on the western gale, were quite in unison with her feelings, which, naturally mild and delicate, and alive to the quick powers of sensibility, were peculiarly calculated to admire the greatness of the work of nature, and venerate its divine Author.

For, although she wished to steal from the rigid decorum of the cloister, and mingle in the gay scenes of the world, she was not insensible to the beauties of nature. No, far from it; she took infinite delight in viewing the romantic scenery, and discovered on all occasions a most quick and lively sensibility.

In short, her present life was not in unison with her innate feelings, and she wished, though prudently dared, to steal away from its dull insipidity.

CHAPTER II.

“———What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come phial———” —SHAKESPEARE.

AGNES as usual, after having taken her morning's walk, came to the gardener for her accustomed glass of water.

When she made her wonted request, the colour faded from Carlo's cheek, his knees shook, and his whole frame trembled, from a consciousness of the evil draught he was going to administer.

But soon with a stoic firmness he recovered from his agitated manner, and proceeded to execute the task which the fair one enjoined him to do; before which she asked him the reason why he was so agitated. “A simple glass of water is all I asked you for, and why are you so disturbed? you never appeared so before; tell me the reasons; have I offended you?”

“No, madam,” replied Carlo; “I have been subject to alternate fits of the ague this last week, and this is one of their cold shiverings.”

This evasive reply was barely sufficient to satisfy the mind of Agnes, who was not so easily blinded; he could not so easily dupe her imagination; yet she little thought what was concealed in the water, and she drank it off without heeding anything, or remarking anything concerning its clearness.

In a few minutes she was taken with the most convulsive fits, and presently dropped into a state of utter insensibility.

The gardener now proceeded to take his victim to the appointed place, where a chaise and four, by order of the marquis, was waiting to convey her to his chateau.

The state of Carlo's feelings on viewing the countenance of Agnes, when he carried her to the carriage, were much agitated, for the innocent victim of his guilty crime had a face which was fixed in the pallid hue of death; a solemn serenity stole over her countenance; she looked more lovely than ever, but the wily monster, whose steeled soul was worked up to the commission of the basest crime, soon recovered from the agitation which even the vindictive Turk or the wild African would have discovered; his guilt-bronzed cheek was alternately tinged with a faint momentary blush, proceeding from the effect of the workings of his conscience.

The marquis having minutely informed the gardener how she would appear externally after the fatal glass of water was given, was fully prepared to meet with the worst.

Not even the swift vibrations of the chaise, its dreadful rattling, and the thunder which now rolled in heavy peals in the firmament, and which seemed the vengeance of almighty God for the marquis's iniquity, could awaken the sleeping goddess from her unnatural slumber.

She continued in the same state of insensibility till she reached the chateau.

The dreadful storm which came on alarmed the marquis; it seemed the awful prelude for futurity, and a judgment for his crimes; and he now thought that the cup of felicity, which he insidiously and mercilessly mixed for himself, was about to be eternally wrested from him.

He often reflected upon the vast capacity of the conscience, which he considered as merely a bugbear of the imagination, and assured himself that an eternal sleep would follow our dissolution in this life; for if the powers of conscience could ever be vanquished by moral strength, they would then cease to have that efficacy on the mind, would cease to be of that weighty importance, and would no longer bring the hardened sinner to repentance.

When the marquis looked on the dark and desolate scene around him, he hid himself for one moment breaking his peace, by supposing that the horrid peals of thunder seemed the death-

sound for his departure. "How absurd is it," thought the wretched victim of apostacy, "that we shall be eventually rewarded according to the works done in the body." He followed the Epicurean maxim of "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." "Therefore, since we are encouraged to provide for to-day what we know not to-morrow will bring to pass, I have obtained by force to-day what I should have lost by temporising till to-morrow. If there is any light in the world, I have resolutely refused it; I have liked to live better in darkness, and I shall never be convinced by any of our moral divines of the futurity to come. My mind has risen above the shackles of an injurious superstition, which prompts the mind to deny the exercise of the feelings, and commands them to be dead to the pleasures of the world."

The marquis, who was a thorough sceptic, stopped not to examine into the eventual consequences of anything which he did, and whether it would be ultimately productive of any good in the world to come; for it was a matter of indifference what he did, and anything which occupied his fancy he cared not the means by which he indulged it.

He now proceeded to the chateau, where he found Agnes recovering from her long sleep. She was astonished and amazed in finding herself in a strange house sumptuously fitted up, and infinitely more alarmed at seeing the marquis.

She endeavoured to discover how she came into his mansion; but so palpable was the mystery, that it mocked her power to gain the least possible elucidation. When she saw the marquis she wept bitterly, but her tears were rather dictated by pity than anger, when she reflected on the consummate baseness of him who now endeavoured to seduce her from the path of honest virtue and sober chastity, and who, to tamper with her orphan state, used so wily and ignominious a scheme.

The measures which he had taken, poor Agnes justly thought, were unworthy of the honour, generosity, and integrity of nobility; for to injure the weak state of an orphan, to seduce her affections from the path of virtue, and plant anguish in her juvenile breast, discovered the blackest baseness of a heart stained with the worst, the most indelible guilt.

When she had recovered from her state of insensibility, the marquis sent her word that he desired to speak with her, and begged she would prepare for the interview, which was of course most painful to her.

When he entered the room, a smile of compassion and the most tender love played on his countenance, which, added to his manly beauty and the graceful symmetry of his person, made him look singularly interesting.

The languishing softness of Agnes's fine black eyes was directed up to him with a peculiar expression of meekness, which truly characterized the resignation which she bore to her injured state.

The marquis proceeded to take hold of her hand, and Agnes having a more full view of his countenance, she was disgusted, and shrunk back, amazed at his presumption. The complexion of his heart was like the beautiful skin of the venomous serpent, which smiling unheeded in the grass, leaps on its victim, and inflicts the deadly wound.

Such did the marquis, for his wily villany had ruined an innocent and virtuous virgin.

She gazed on him with horror, and on his advancing to take hold of her hand, she gave a violent shriek, and fainted away in his arms.

When she came to herself, and her spirits were restored, she exclaimed, "Detested monster! base, execrable wretch! fly from my sight! do not think that though your infernal plots have so far succeeded, they will have any predominance on my feelings! Do not think to insult my pitiable state, or to tamper with the sufferings of the orphan!"

"Cease, fair Agnes, cease to weep," replied the marquis; "cease to load the man with curses who has only been goaded on by the violence of his passion to sacrifice all at its shrine; look with an eye of compassion on your eternally devoted lover, who will endeavour to do all in his power to make you happy and comfortable, who will teach you to forget the past miseries of the cloister and its rigid penance."

Agnes wept bitterly, and her mind, which but a few minutes ago raged and triumphed in all the dignity of conscious innocence, now fell into the soft cadence of pity and regret. She wept for the baseness of the marquis, and felt sensibly for the unpardonable measures which he had taken to gratify his desires.

It was in vain for Agnes to make up her mind to a sense of submission to his desires; she

shuddered at the idea of having escaped from the convent, or rather having been forced, and possibly indeed without the knowledge of the lady abbess.

The marquis did all in his power to soothe poor Agnes's affliction, and was happy to find that she behaved to him with more freedom, but it was a liberality which hurt him more than before, and damped the glow of his wishes, instead of increasing their strength.

She behaved to him with a cold, distant, and dignified urbanity, using none of those violent exclamations and just abuses which a more passionate and less amiable temper would have done; but her nature excused it, for she was the very soul of meekness.

The marquis was awed by her commanding presence, and more particularly when he urged her to consider the nature of his vows, and acquiesced with his wishes. His address was more modest, and visibly divested of that impassioned glow of expression and warm rhapsody, which possibly carried with it more energy, because it bore a stronger resemblance of truth.

Leaving the marquis and Agnes, we now return to the lady abbess, who did not miss the departure of Agnes till it was too late.

She searched the garden till night, and interrogated the gardener most strictly about the affair.

He testified to the lady abbess the strongest sentiments of regret and sorrow for the departure of the young lady, and effected his hypocrisy with such guile, that it materially contributed to ease her of any portion of suspicion which she might have otherwise attached to his character.

The old man, with the most courteous plausibility and sanctimonious gravity, commented on the state of Agnes's mind, which he said was, from his remark, long in a state of melancholy despondency; and added, that he had frequently heard her exclaim in the most impassioned manner, and concluded by mentioning that his curiosity was never sufficiently awakened to induce him to listen to the words of her speech.

He assured the abbess that he would endeavour to trace the route of the fair fugitive, and discover, if possible, who was accessory to it.

She contemplated the discourse of the wily domestic with deep penetration, and the words which escaped from his lips conveyed to her the character of truth; for she could not impute any blame to him, but only asked him why, since he had observed the dejected countenance, and heard the frequent exclamations of Agnes, he did not inform her, and thus have prevented the terrible misfortune.

She continued her conversation with him, exacting everything she could in the most inquisitive manner; but the more she endeavoured to find out the particulars, the more did his wily conversation withdraw her ideas from the subject of her fears.

The lady abbess having made all the inquiries which she possibly could, and not having gained the least satisfactory information, gave up the unfortunate Agnes as lost to her for ever.

She was placed in the most critical situation, for her pupil not having been regularly invested with the order of the nuns, and consequently not subjected to the restraint and confinement which it necessarily imposed on them, it doubly engaged the duty of the abbess to watch over her conduct, and keep her at all events within the bounds of the monastery.

What made it still more painful to her was the length of absence that intervened since she last saw the father of Agnes.

She knew not where to address to him, or to consult or console him, on the loss of his child.

She was also anxious to bring the gardener to a court of justice, in order to discover if his principles would bear the test of examination; but here her courage failed her, for by bringing the domestic to a confession of all that he knew, would be the means of giving publicity to that which she wished to bury in eternal oblivion.

It was highly imperious for the honour of her own reputation, and also for the unsullied fame of the convent, to hush the matter in silence, as Agnes not having been invested with the order of the nuns, she was only accountable for her conduct to those parents who were now unknown to the abbess.

She was touched with the severest pangs of conscience for her reprehensible conduct, and her remorse was visibly increased when the nuns asked after Agnes, inquiring if she was well, and where she was.

She was forced to make a painful reply to their questions, and satisfied them by saying that she was far away from the convent; and concluded by saying, that she requested that they would ask no further questions about Agnes, as peculiar circumstances would not enable her to satisfy their questions.

The bell for vespers tolled, and the lady abbess with the holy train proceeded to evening prayers.

The gloom of the chapel, a few expiring tapers, which, emitting only a feeble light, served to show the awful silence and the solemnity of the interior of the edifice, heightened the melancholy of the sainted lady's mind.

The wan light of a taper which was held by a nun at the altar gave a deadly hue to the countenance of the superior.

It was customary for her at vespers to give all her holy children a lecture on the sanctity of the place, the justness of their lives, and the certain unfading bliss that would ultimately follow.

She commented on the painful thoughts that must rack the brain of the wearied pleasurable and dissipated gamester, when on the brink of eternity, where its pains and torments are to be experienced for the sorrows and stains of this corruptible world.

She said, "Of the wicked man, when the hour of dissolution arrives, and his soul is going to take its flight to the mansions of—what? not of immortality as I am accustomed to say, but, alas! to the dreary regions of eternal misery and perdition,—how painful must be the reflection of him, my dear children, who, when going to depart from all which smiles around him thinks that for a few years' dissipation, licentiousness, and profligacy, he is going to be tormented for ever in the regions of misery, where an everlasting fire will torment the soul, direful in its judgment, and unquenchable in its nature. Believe, my dear circle, that those who follow a monastic life are sure to be eventually rewarded. Are pleasures to be experienced in this life? is this transitory pilgrimage to be productive of ease, comfort, and prosperity? Vain idea! it is the preparation for that eternal bliss which awaits us in the world to come. How can that preparation be effected in this vain, seductive, and sorrowful world? Is our human nature strong enough to resist its temptations, to withstand its flattery, and brook its insults? Certainly not; our minds are too much enchanted and allured from the path of virtue by the gaudy display of pompous magnificence, the parade of dissipation, the crowd of feasting, and the luxury of age, to pay that strict adherence to the social duties which is inseparable from happiness. Man, in the hurry of both domestic and public enjoyments, too frequently forgets the source from which they spring, and likewise the object for which they are intended, they not being calculated for us to enjoy at our pleasure, but only placed in our way like a bait, to see how readily and greedily we catch at it, and thus fall at once into the snare of temptation. Men and women are by nature miserably prone to evil, and of course unable to resist all the charms of this life; for our passions will have their sway, our sensual appetites will be satiated, and our weakness indulged. Is this, then, to prepare ourselves for the bliss which awaits those who have conducted themselves regularly, soberly, and religiously? No! Then fly from the world of sorrow and temptation, and take refuge within this holy edifice, where nothing but the mild doctrine, the energetic charm, and the social comfort of religion is exercised to revivify the soul, and prepare it for eternity. Perhaps, my dear children, you think me too severe, and that I have drawn too harsh a picture of mankind; left out the good, and enumerated the evil. If I have I am not deceived; for examine into the nature of mankind, and you will find that the existence of virtue is rarely if ever found; and that we are all poor and helpless beings, marked with sorrow, and visited with calamity."

The lady abbess now dismissed the nuns, and her thoughts from the miseries of life rolled on the subject of Agnes.

"Oh! unhappy child!" she exclaimed, "you are cast abandoned on the world, with no friend to pity you; no fond mother to comfort and relieve you in the hour of distress; but are plunged at once in the wide abyss of misery and guilt, which will close and emerge you for ever into solitary darkness. Oh! unfortunate world! oh! base degenerate age! happy shall I be when I bid adieu to all its painful scenes of iniquity, and be no longer eye-witness of its multiplied vices. The appointed age for dissolution is now near at hand, and I find that the taper of life begins to wane. I have endeavoured throughout the whole of my exist-

ence to cultivate the spirit of good, and to impress on all the sanctified hopes of a monastic life. I have been deceived in my calculations of mankind; and experience has too truly corrected the gay and fascinating images which in my youth I have formed of men. 'Oh ! ill-fated hour that ever Agnes escaped from these gates ! What was the cause of her departure ? what instigated it ? Surely some ruthless villain, to glut his lawless passion, tore her from the convent, entailing destruction on himself, and eternal perdition on her. Whilst under my protection she was far away from the guile of flattery and the snare of temptation; and she followed the road to ultimate bliss. But since, poor girl, she has been lured away from these walls by the deceit of a villain, may she escape all those evils; which I greatly fear will but too certainly fall on her ! for where mutual love and undivided affection do not regulate the heart of each, true happiness cannot exist.'

The mind of the lady abbess was visibly dejected, and her spirits were tinged with melancholy, which could not fail of being remarked by the nuns; yet she acquiesced in pious submission to the stern decree.

She tried to reproach her conscience and conduct, but nature denied the effort, for how could she be answerable for the passions and conduct of her child at all times, and when she was away ? Yet the idea of her absence, and the dead gloom which marked her spirits when she came down to vespers, was now visible; and which was the more increased, as memory, in agonising succession, mustered up the past actions of the departed sister.

Poor Agnes being the factotum of the lady abbess, she was doubly missed, and when the lady wanted anything, and looked around for the dear object to whom she was wont to apply, she burst into a flood of tears, and sought relief in lamentation; for in vain did she endeavour to control her distressed feelings, which on other points she would have resolutely done, and would have checked the sallies of grief. But this was a subject of a nature by far too tender to be restrained; it was one which concerned one of her dearest objects in life, and one for which she wept bitterly, when she thought that she was exposed to the miseries, temptations, and guilt of the world, without a soul to comfort or to guide the course of her juvenile mind.

Agnes was fine in person; the contour of her face resembled that of Madonna; meekness and sensibility were distinguishing traits in her character; her eyes were of the softest shade of blue, and directed to heaven with a smile of fervent religion, whilst her figure was tall and majestic, and in the midst of gentleness and delicacy, she maintained a Junonian dignity.

The abbess had imbibed a fond regard for Agnes, not only from the beauty of her countenance, the purity of her principles, and the strict regularity of her conduct, but also from that fondness, that sympathy, and gratitude, which she ever discovered. Her benevolence warmed the heart of the abbess, the sunshine of which all the poor basked in, and proudly owned the author of its glory.

She ever professed a union of idea, similarity of sentiment, and congeniality of desire with her guardian. She never disputed with her, but constantly received her advice with affectionate gratitude. She studied the little wishes of the abbess, and was most zealous in gratifying them. She liked the sisterhood, and mingled in the society with pleasure; but whenever the bell for vespers chimed, she was awed, and felt a sort of religious calm pervade her spirits.

In short, Agnes was innately good; intrinsic worth marked her for her own, and she was virtue personified.

The abbess felt her loss greatly, but finding no hope of ever seeing her again, she resigned herself to the misery of the case, and mourned in silence her sad departure.

CHAPTER III.

"O happiness! where art thou to be found ?
I see thou dwellest not with birth or beauty;
Nor dost thou, it would seem, with virtue dwell,
Else had this gentle maiden missed thee not."

LEAVING the poor disconsolate lady abbess to her miserable reflections, let us take a peep at the conversation, and the rooms of the marquis and Agnes.

The wily monster could in vain impress on her juvenile mind the justness of his vows, or the strength of his affection; yet at times she appeared to be struck with his attention, and

she said, " Surely such unremitting exertions for my seeming comfort and happiness cannot be dictated by any selfish passion ; yet I cannot acquiesce with his wishes of marriage ; he may like me, and may give me all the felicity which this poor life can bestow, yet I cannot accept it from his hands. He is handsome, of, a fine figure, and dignified manners, sufficient to win the coldest heart ; yet I cannot love him ; it is fear that dictates any little attention which I may show him : but, unhappy fellow, he confuses its origin, and mistakes the purpose for which it is intended. Surely gratitude can never be called affection ! the dictates of love, although they may sometimes, do not always proceed from the source of generosity ; what attention I have shown proceeds from the sense I entertain of his external temporary kindness ; but then I wish solemnly to impress on his mind, (but his ears are deaf to the voice of my desires,) that my affection is not for him, but for his attention, and that I can never submit to his wishes."

The marquis's soul, amidst all the roses of transporting voluptuousness, amidst the ecstatic delights arising from the anticipation of soon having a final completion of his wishes, was racked by the blighting, damning fear of a refusal, which chills the heat of imagination and damps the ardent glow of love.

He endeavoured, by all that art could effect or ingenuity enable him, to impress on the mind of Agnes a favourable idea of his person and sentiments. So far he succeeded, but his love was what he had to combat with, and it engaged the most wily deceit on his part.

It was customary for him to lead Agnes to the forest, and there on his knees he supplicated her to consider his affection, its weight, and its warmth.

It was in one of these evenings that Henry discovered him with her ; and the reason why the porter maintained so stern a silence on the mysterious circumstance was owing to the absence of his master from the chateau ; and the old domestic was afraid to reveal anything to Henry, lest by so doing he should discover the plots of his master, and at once unfold the history of the individuals whom he met in the forest.

The marquis led Agnes constantly into the forest, merely from affectation in admiring the wild beauties of nature, and thus endeavour to impress on her juvenile mind the most favourable opinions of his sensibilit.

For this purpose he led her one evening to a small amphitheatre in the wood. He pointed out the waving grace of the poplar, the pendent foliage of the birch, and the weeping melancholy of the larch, which, towering above the rest, sighed mournfully in the passing gale. The lightness of the mountain ash, and the solemn tint of the chesnut, oak, and fir, gave a deeper shade to the forest as contrasted with the former.

This was a fine treat to Agnes, and the primeval stillness of the scene powerfully contributed to lull her senses into a pleasing oblivion of the past, and the wretched author of her troubles. The awful and impressive grandeur of the forest softened her feelings into an entire acquiescence with those of the marquis, who on this occasion appeared unusually polite and attentive. He commented with great energy on the beauty of the surrounding scenery, the solemn grandeur and solitary stillness of which greatly enchanted Agnes.

Not long after they had been in the forest the weary orb was preparing to sink into rest ; in a few minutes a crimson glow on the horizon marked the west. The beams of the setting sun lighted the tops of the far distant mountains, which closed the perspective of the scene, whilst the whole of the boundless horizon was involved in one general blush. Soon this assumed a more dappled hue, for a saffron tint intermixed with a soft expression of grey mingled with either, and lost itself upwards in the same melting tint of blue. The shades of night now began to deepen, and twilight stole gradually over the surface of nature. A solemn stillness involved the face of things, and naught was heard but the rumbling of a distant stream, or the dull tinklings of the bells of sheep, who sought their evening folds with the declining sun. The silver orb now rose in unclouded majesty, the azure concave of heaven was spangled with a profusion of brilliant gems, the most serene calm filled the air, the friendly tribute of the dissolution of an intensely hot day.

Here the juvenile couple remained wrapt up in the most pleasing contemplation.

This softened the rigour of Agnes's mind, and from this very night she was impressed with a far more favourable opinion of him.

They had not far to go home, which they soon reached.

" How calm ! how still is now the face of nature," said the marquis ; " how solemnly impres-

alive! This scene, my dear Agnes, awakens in my mind the utmost melancholy, and I am sorry and distressed that you should be so insensible to the weight and sincerity of my love."

" Do not distress me, honoured sir, any more on this painful subject; I have already most simply acquainted you with my sentiments, and if you are resolved to urge the matter any farther, it will only be at the expense of my happiness and peace, and your sorrow and disappointment."

" Ah! do not talk of peace to one who is your devoted, your most impassioned lover; one who adores you to madness; who, if you will return his wishes, and consent to an union, will sacrifice all to make you happy, independent, and comfortable. The strong measures which I have taken will, I think, at once convince you of the strength of my love, and the fidelity of my wishes."

" These, sir, are the very reasons which instigate my refusal; for the steps which you have taken being highly repugnant to my feelings, and imperiously distressing to the venerable lady abbess to whose charge I was committed, I can never think of returning your violence with my love; for were I to comply with your request, I could not be happy, as the idea which instigated my submission to your wishes would ever be productive of anguish, grief, and remorse; besides, only think on the painful reflections of the injured lady abbess; if you are capable of the slightest impression of honour and delicate sensibility, think on the misery which that poor woman must endure, added to the severe penance and sufferings which will arise from that ill-judged reproach which will probably lay to her spotless conscience."

" Alas, my dear Agnes, the ways of this troublesome world are dark and mysterious, often nourished in hopes, and led to disappointment: they require some violence, and you may rest assured that the holy order of the convent is replete with ignorance, folly, and superstition. It is in my opinion a happy, a glorious thing, that you have escaped from its severe penance, which is only calculated for those who, having spent a wicked life, retire to the cloister to wipe away the stain of their guilt: but you, my dearest soul, who have never, I am sure, been guilty of the least bad action in your life, why should you seclude yourself within the walls of a convent to mix with those who have practised baseness, and made iniquity their code; who only draw you with the melancholy of their feigned repentance, when perhaps too late; for do you suppose that happiness can follow us after this life? Do you think that we shall be sent into any other world after our dissolution in this? But as you may not be possibly acquainted with my principles of religion, I will cease to engage your attention on the subject; I only take advantage of this opportunity to give you some few hints on the state of my religious principles, which, I can assure you, are free, unbiased, and uncontrolled."

Agnes was visibly alarmed, and also much grieved, to find that the marquis added to the greatest baseness the most criminal liberality of sentiment, which, as ill-judged as uncontrolled, was the sure offspring of atheism, which ruled his heart, and is the never-failing concomitant of the rake, the villain, and the gameter; but a more cool reflection beguiled her amazement, and taught her to consider apostacy as the fruits of a benighted mind. She therefore no longer wondered that scepticism regulated his conduct, and did not let it operate on her mind as any additional disgust against him: indeed, his seemingly kind attention and insinuating manner had materially allayed the severity of that judgment which his unpardonable conduct had justified her to maintain; but persuasive eloquence softens the rigour of resentment, and operates as a talisman to lull the mind into peaceful acquiescence.

To do justice on both sides to the feelings of Agnes, impious forces us to acquaint our readers that the sentiments of unconquerable hatred which she had first imbued against the marquis were now greatly allayed; indeed his courteous manners, dignified air, and lordly address, made a visible impression on her spirits; but this she also sedulously laboured to conceal, for she still endeavoured externally to profess the same cold indifference to the marquis, but at times the manner of her address to him exposed her stifled passion.

The marquis still continued his walks, and the evening of the 10th being particularly fine, it induced them both to prolong their walk towards the forest which belonged to the domain of the marquis, at least as long as he was in possession of the chateau. He commented on the calm stillness, melting softness, and enchanting solemnity of the scene, and also took occasion at all periods to impress Agnes with the most favourable opinion, at least as propitious to himself as he possibly could make it; but she, nevertheless, as often took ~~special care~~ to com-

announce to him, that, would he conduct himself honourably, she would forget the past, live with him, and esteem him in the pure and matchless affection of a sister.

To this the marquis generally made but cold replies, and tried to dispel the sisterly affection by the most insinuating manner.

He conducted his victim to a small valley in the wood, and having reached a venerable tree, round the trunk of which was fixed a circular bench, they both sat down to refresh themselves, and taste the sweets of the mild evening.

The marquis gazed on the solitary stillness which marked the face of nature, for all was lulled into soft repose.

The waving blackness of the forest which swept downwards on each side of the hill to the valley, the distant murmur of gently gliding streams which stole along the vale below, the graceful motion of the willow, the sombre shade of the cypress, and the gloomy aspect of the larch, heightened their feelings above the common sphere of worldly reflections. The birds sang divinely, perhaps in fond token of praise to the sylvan goddess who was then so near them; the shrill note of the blackbird, intermixed with the melting softness of the thrush, produced as fine a contrast as did that of the goldfinch and the bullfinch.

Philomel had not yet poured her plaintive sweetness; her swelling notes were as yet silent, and she had not yet commenced to lull the sorrow of life into a pleasing oblivion.

After having refreshed themselves they proceeded to the forest, the tops of which were just lighted up by the rays of the setting sun, which had now lost itself behind the western hills.

It afforded Agnes peculiar pleasure to gaze on the gilded orb, which, previous to its dissolution, looked like a ball of fire, which fired the thickly-matted underwood below.

The marquis dwelt with peculiar softness on the lovely beauty of the scene. The last rays of the sun had lighted up the turreted corners of an ancient chateau, which peeped through a small aperture in the forest.

The marquis having walked on a little way with Agnes, they came to a small glade; and it was here that he made so tender an address, and dictated such impassioned language to her, to which she endeavoured as much as possible to be deaf, and also to blind his vain ideas and heated imagination.

It was in this very forest, and at this very spot, that Henry (the son of the old woman who was wont to amuse Leonora with her marvellous tales) lost himself; and these were the same individuals whom he distinguished; and however softened was the austerity of the injured Agnes, still, nevertheless, when the base monster pursued his unjustifiable requests, she answered him with spirited dignity, and with sentiments most nearly allied to the ineffable disgust which she experienced.

The reply of Agnes gave the manly Henry the most real concern for her welfare. Perhaps the tender manner in which she replied to the marquis's vain requests, and the fewer were the words which she blended with it, increased the apprehensions of the hero of the forest.

He really took great sympathy in this cause of Agnes, and would certainly have rushed forward to have rescued her from the misery which awaited her, had not the presence of some domestics repelled the vigour of his resentment. If he had been bold enough at least to have attempted, if not to have put into execution his projected plan, death would certainly have been the reward of his noble spirit; for the wily marquis being naturally of a strong, vindictive, and inflammable disposition, would have ill brooked the interference of Henry, however honourable and praiseworthy was its object.

We may now account for the silence which the old porter maintained on the subject of the two lovers, which Henry mentioned to him.

It being the marquis's positive order that nobody should be let into the castle on any pretence whatever, the old porter, on being informed of the strange story which Henry communicated to him, and well knowing that the individuals were Agnes and his master, he professed an utter ignorance, and also all possible silence, lest the idea should suggest itself that the very people whom his guest met were the owners of that roof which afforded him protection.

For when Henry first rung the bell Carlo was very unwilling to let the unknown person in, but his persuasive eloquence and pitiable state made the venerable domestic compassionate his situation, upon oath that he would never reveal to anybody the circumstance of his having

had a night's lodgings in the castle. So far he pledged his honour, but not being able to obtain any information from the old man, he determined to communicate the whole adventure to his mother, and thus it came to the ears of Leonora.

Henry was much astonished at the singular silence of the old man, and began seriously to reflect on the roof under which he was, and the quality of the disposition of the owner.

The idea that the man whom he saw with the fair one was the Marquis de St. Puffet suggested itself; indeed he suffered it in some measure to be confirmed, owing to the taciturnity of the porter on the subject of his fears.

It then appears now that his suspicions are verified, for he prognosticated most faithfully.

The marquis was quite ignorant of the accommodation which Carlo had afforded to the stranger; indeed, had he been acquainted with any portion of it, poor Henry would have fallen a victim to his ferocity, and would have paid dearly indeed for his accommodation.

CHAPTER IV.

*"Yes, I confess that he has won my soul
By generous love and honourable vows." — OTWAY.*

HAVING explained who the two individuals were who so greatly heightened the fears of Henry, we prosecute the painful love which the marquis still discovered towards Agnes; indeed she now by degrees became susceptible of its impression, and its author rose to her mind in a much more acceptable light than what it was wont to do.

All the blandishments of seduction, the tricks of vanity, and the eloquence of sensual passion, were called into action to blind the reason and fire the imagination of the fair one. The soul of her tormentor nightly revelled in the most ecstatic joys, from the anticipation of happiness; the roses of transporting voluptuousness blushed with shame on his cheek, and reflected a deeper shade of iniquity on his heart, which regulated his conduct, and taught him to admire with blind enthusiasm the society of his adored goddess.

The sensibility of Agnes was not penetrating enough to discover the eventual consequences that would ensue from the circumstance of their union, or had discrimination enough to perceive the grounds on which that affection, or rather low passion, was formed. She vainly and foolishly thought that the assiduous attention, affectionate conduct, and sympathizing congeniality of sentiment, could not be the effect of the sensual transport of the moment, but the offspring of a lasting affection.

Every day, which rolled in monotonous succession, served only to heighten the esteem of Agnes, and so in proportion augmented the attention of the marquis, which acquired more strength, and was exercised with renewed assiduity.

The innocent girl, instead of maintaining an implacable hatred and rooted disgust, discovered the dawning of a tender sympathy and mutual love. Indeed she went from one extreme to the other, for in the gay delirium of her passion, and blinded with the artful address and insinuating manners of the marquis, she never thought of the convent, or on the miserable Lady Abbess; no, every idea was hushed in silence; every time she wished to indulge in the fond thought, and bestow some tender regard on the memory of the virtuous woman from whose society she was so cruelly and so shamefully wrested; the towering form of the author of all her wrongs was opposed to her presence, to dissipate her gloomy reflections on the convent.

He invariably took occasion of declaiming against the wretched life of the cloister, its rigid devotion and useless penance; he also never failed to hint to her the comparative state of happiness; for, blessed with the smiles of affluence, love, and grandeur, she ought to look down with disdain on the frowns of the monastery, its severe duties and miserable victims.

The marquis was villain enough to do anything where self-interest was at stake; and he not only assiduously endeavoured to engage her affection, but also to pervert her principles of holy religion, by corrupting her heart with the miserable fallacies and criminal doctrine of apostacy. No feeling guided his conduct except that of the utter completion of his wishes; and where the object of his desire was in view, he sacrificed all at its shrine of *virtus, honour, and religion*, to gain his end. He was well acquainted with the weakness of the fair, and was thoroughly conversant with all the blandishments of seduction and the cozen words of love.

He could mix insinuation of conduct with plausibility of address, where any tender regard for any particular object could be found; and where sensibility was most alive, he would pursue his end with vigour, and ultimately vanquish. He well knew how to please the fair; and the comeliness of his countenance, the grace of his form, and the elegance of his address, operated as a talisman on the minds of all; and when he resolved to conquer any impenetrable barrier, beauty of countenance and dignified manners favoured his schemes, and ensured him ample success.

His unwearied assiduity was still maintained; indeed, it had gained such an ascendancy in the mind of Agnes, that she now almost perfectly coalesced in all with the object of her growing esteem; the mist of hatred, which before clouded her senses, and dimmed the light of her eyes, was now utterly dispelled, and the sunshine of love succeeded.

A sympathetic affection was maintained by each, and they both indulged their evening walks amongst some of the most romantic scenery of the forest.

They took infinite delight in watching the declining sun; and it afforded Agnes no small increased portion of satisfaction to witness the delicate sensibility and the lively relish which the marquis partook, in admiring the beauties of nature.

Agnes did all in her power to mingle with her admiration the awful contemplation of eternity, and to remind him of the Author of all nature; for it was now her indispensable duty to endeavour as much as possible to enlighten the benighted mind of the marquis; but still she feared to have any harangue with him on the subject of eternity, as it afforded a matter of the warmest debate; and he ever concluded with this absurd reply, that he liked darkness better than light, and not all the sophistry of the age could alter his principles.

Still Agnes thought that by gentleness and softness she might beguile his miserable principles; for she was taught to look with horror on the ultimate life of the atheist; indeed this afforded a new spring to profess coldness to his love.

She feared to join in any union with him who had no thoughts of eternity, and was so ill-prepared for the world to come; indeed he disclaimed the idea of another life, and ever strongly maintained that the soul would be freed from the drudgery of life, and return to its native state, unfettered and unspotted.

But then Agnes pressed the matter close, and wished to know what he meant by its native state; to which the atheist replied, to a state of quiet and undisturbed repose.

Agnes finding that the wretched victim of apostacy was deaf to the voice of reason, and pertinacious in the adherence to his own principles, ceased to urge the matter any more, finding that it was truly of no avail to direct good advice to the heart of him who was insensible of the value of the impression which it ought to make.

As long as Agnes did not trouble the marquis about the fallacy and criminality of his principles, he never molested hers, but suffered her to follow her own code of religion.

On this score she comforted herself, added to the temporary but comfortable idea, that she might still find the wandering sheep, and bring the hardened sinner to repentance.

To fly from the marquis was impossible, to avoid his passion was equally impracticable; she therefore consoled herself with the idea, that she was forced to give way to his desires; indeed the only fault she now found in him was his atheistical principles.

His soft manner and pleasing address charmed her and won her soul, for he was chaste in his remarks and delicate in his conversation; when he wished to move, indeed, all the most courteous, dignified, and sanctimonious manner was his. He was never at a loss for the power of expression, which on all occasions he managed with facility.

He now thought that he was sure of certain happiness, and reflected on the ecstatic bliss of the union with the most adorable of objects; yet still, when the senses were intoxicating themselves in the fervour of love and the heat of imagination, cold fear, blighting, chilling fear, damped the glow of his ardent wishes, and stifled the impassioned voice of love.

It presented itself like a terrible monster to his sight, and chided him in these terms:—

“ Poor, vain, weak, and imposing fool! think not to gain success from the unwarrantable measures which you have so wickedly adopted! think not that your baseness and cruelty will gain the affections of the most virtuous, chaste, and amiable of all beings; reflect for one moment on the unpardonable plans which you have pursued, and reason, unprejudiced, and in the clearest voice, will pronounce, no! Then cease to persecute the injured fair one, and

return her to the protection from which you stole her, which will be the only means of salvation for your soul in the world to come."

The marquis was vastly alarmed at this terrible vision, and endeavoured as much as possible to chase the spectre from his ideas; and when reason calmed the apprehensions of fear, his miserable sophisms taught him to consider it as only a bugbear of the imagination, which intruded itself to wound his peace.

He suffered unreal phantoms of bliss to float on the surface of his misguided mind, and in proportion as it fluctuated, so did the causes which produced the agitation of the spirit's wander also. Yet his fired soul knew not the power of conscience; when he talked with Agnes he passed over all matters how he came by her person with heedless unconcern, and added, that his conduct was dictated by the force of his feelings.

He still continued his evening walks, and each night the ignorant unsuspecting Agnes discovered fresh causes to love him.

Weeks succeeded weeks strengthening their mutual attachment, till at last poor Agnes, utterly worn out with the importunities of the marquis, was forced to yield to his wishes, and the fatal union was finally completed.

The evening before the monk performed the ceremony they both took a walk, being induced by the peculiar mildness of the evening.

The sun had long sunk into the lower world, and the moon was just ascending the glowing horizon, which was still tinged with the faint rays of the faded splendour of the west. The firmament was studded with countless myriads of bright gems, and not a cloud darkened the smooth concave of heaven. The wind had sunk, and all was hushed in the most deep repose, save the distant murmur of a rivulet which stole along the margin of the forest.

The silver beams of the moon presented to the lovers the most romantic picture; it lighted up a cluster of turrets, which peeped through the thickly woven branches of the underwood; and the partial shade of its reflection on the water and its chaste grandeur elevated the minds of the youthful pair to the most serious contemplation.

"What a pleasing, delightful, and enchanting prelude to happiness does this scene afford!" exclaimed the marquis.

"Ah!" returned Agnes, with a sigh, "may the tenour of our lives be marked with the same peaceful serenity."

"For you, my dear Agnes," resumed the marquis, "will I study to make the course of your future existence analogous to the mildness and composure of this scene."

The two lovers now roamed to periods which were yet far distant; they painted that ideal happiness which awaited them in the most fairy forms, and laid down a plan of life, which, if strictly followed, could not but be productive of lasting happiness and ease. May it be the case! But Agnes, the unsuspecting Agnes, but little reflected, that whom she had selected for her partner, in this mutable life of bliss and woe, was an unprincipled villain and base monster, who sacrificed all at the shrine of his passion; and, like a river pent up, breaks out, and bears all down with commanding impetuosity and irresistible force.

But, no more to dwell on this painful subject, suffice it to say, that the ceremony was performed, and futurity will shortly evince whether the union was productive of happiness or no.

CHAPTER V.

"Who aids the cause of innocence oppresses
Is by this act alone supremely blessed;
No greater rapture man on earth can know
Than that of feeling and relieving woe."

LEAVING the bride and bridegroom for the present, it may not be amiss to acquaint our readers with the period at which the Marquis de St. Puffet was robbed by the unfortunate Duclôs, which happened to be about this very time; for, having some important business to adjust at Paris immediately after his marriage, and having left it unfinished whilst with Agnes, he was now forced to complete it as soon as possible, as it was a matter which highly concerned him.

Having informed his lovely bride of his forced departure, she painfully suffered him to go,

which gave her great uneasiness to be so soon separated from the man upon whom by long study, and great process of time, she had been taught to place her affections.

Having, therefore, gained his wife's consent, he set out for Paris. He took his pocket-book with him, wishing something to be altered in the title-deeds, which he always carried in it. The alteration which he wished to make was to secure the chateau in his family, and also to entail it on his heirs.

He had to cross a dreary heath, having reached which a little before sun-set, he met the unfortunate Duclôs, who attacked and robbed him.

It may be remembered that he made some resistance at first, but finding the daring villain firm to his purpose and stanch in the commission of his guilt, he gave up his pocket-book, in which were the title-deeds belonging to the family chateau of the Count de Gras; deeds which he had nevertheless most singularly found, and kept in the most dishonest manner, and which was of course predictive of such real and unfeigned sorrow to the worthy Count de Gras.

It did not occur to the marquis at first, when he delivered up the pocket-book to Duclôs, that it contained the deeds, or else he would have certainly separated them from the rest of the papers.

The marquis's feelings on finding his severe, his irreparable loss, were indescribable; the most torturing pangs of conscience now agonized his mind; his body trembled, his whole frame shook, and a serious consciousness that they would now fall into the hands of the rightful owner, and thus put a period to his fancied bliss, occupied his senses. He raved like a madman, and could scarcely contain himself. He cursed his vile luck, and his unfortunate existence. Yet a scheme of revenge rose in his mind; he knew the villain by his exterior appearance, and thought that, from the manner of his conduct, he was not an adept in his profession, but was urged to commit his robbery by some pressing misfortune; for the hopes and fears, and the misery and distress, that were depicted on his countenance, still existed in the remembrance of the marquis. He followed the path which Duclôs took, and made every possible inquiry to discover him; but it was useless, for he eluded his sullen watchfulness.

Finding that it was vain to make any further inquiries, he wrote to his wife requesting her to meet him immediately in Paris, as business of the most important nature forced him to prolong his visit.

His wife on receiving the letter was, of course, much agitated, and she set off immediately, in obedience to her husband's strict injunctions.

He informed her immediately on her arrival of his loss, and some other circumstances. She was much affected, and their meeting was, as may be expected, of a nature the most touching.

The character of the marquis, which before was wrapt in clouds of mystery, now began to be rapidly developed; every feature of gloominess, rude passion, and fierce revenge quickly discovered themselves, and he treated the poor unfortunate Agnes with a distant coldness, which grieved and alarmed her more than she could possibly have conceived, and was truly concerned to find so great a change.

She anxiously interrogated him concerning the nature of the title-deeds, and why they so extensively contributed to wound his peace.

To this he preserved a mute silence, and told her in plain terms, as the situation in which he was placed would not allow him to give a reply to any of her officious questions, to be quiet on the subject.

This greatly agitated the mind of Agnes, to find that the man to whom she had liberally given her undeviating affection was unwilling to reveal to her the secret history of his woes, and thus suffer her at least to mitigate them by being the partner of his sorrows. "Surely, if he loves me," thought the wretched Agnes, "he would not wish to conceal from me for one moment any of the circumstances of his affliction. Ought not our distress to be mutual, and ought we not to be acquainted with each other's woes? But some mystery—ah! some dark, some palpable mystery—hovers round this strange silence, and his inexplicable conduct, and I am afraid that I must humbly submit till the darkness is brought to light."

We must again leave the marquis and Agnes to their successive disappointments, and

return to De Gernier, whom we left on the road in search of the venerable Count de Gras and his amiable daughter Leonora.

When he left the cottage, he proceeded for ten leagues; having completed which, he stopped at a small inn to refresh himself, and where he also endeavoured to gain as much intelligence as he possibly could concerning the situation of the chateau. He questioned the landlord about it, and after a long conversation on the subject he gained the most satisfactory intelligence.

Amongst the travellers who lodged at the inn was an elderly gentleman, who from his manner and address appeared like a priest, and discovered, after a slight conversation with him, that it was Monsieur St Merville, the pastor of the village in which was situated the count's rustic cottage.

This was a most charming and pleasant meeting for the worthy prelate, who took infinite delight in the conversation of De Gernier, and was vastly pleased to find that he was going in search of the worthy Count de Gras.

This greatly amused the mind of the worthy divine, as it proved the fidelity of his friend's affection for the family, and the anxious solicitude which he took in their welfare.

The two travellers, by mutual consent, supped together, and De Gernier now proceeded to give Monsieur St Merville (as his mind was nearly allied to the knowledge of all the troubles and misfortunes which had marked the tenor of the count's life) some slight hints on his recent good luck in securing the title-deeds, which would regain the invaded property of the count, and grant him ease, comfort, and plenty in his declining years. Yet he passed over the method by which he became possessed of the writings, as the good De Gernier shuddered in his own mind at the iniquity of his friend Duclôs, and was as anxious as possible to spare the lash of resentment which other individuals would have exercised on his character.

Monsieur St Merville now proceeded to give De Gernier some intelligence concerning his son, and also dwelt with emphasis on the reasons which forced him to retire from the gay scenes of the world, to take up his abode in the wilds of solitude; and he hinted also the kindness which he had received from the worthy Count de Gras.

The venerable prelate drew a most unfavourable picture of mankind, and the fine gloss which his youthful imagination had shaded it with his experience had softened, and maturer years made it die away. The eagerness and delight with which he courted scenes of pleasure in his early life, he said, was now grown into an utter contempt of all its sorrow and vanity.

He gave De Gernier many sad examples of young men being hurried away by the force of worldly temptation; indeed, from his conversation with our hero, it plainly appeared, that with all his anger and disappointment he compassionated the frailty and vice of the age.

His mind was open to the strong conviction of our nature being miserably prone to evil, and wholly unable to check all the more rude propensities of the mind; he was merciful in his remarks, and pitiful in his condemnation.

De Gernier now entered into a more general detail with the venerable divine on many important circumstances of his life, and also answered in some measure for that pensive melancholy which had recently shaded the mind of the count.

This of course gave infinite satisfaction to the worthy prelate, as it afforded him a secret clue wherewith to account for the unfavourable symptoms which had marked his conduct. He now no longer wondered that it was tinctured by soft sensibility, the sweet endearing charm of the feeling and virtuous mind, which is particularly able to feel for the woes of others, and sympathize with mankind on its sad vicissitudes, incidental miseries, and unforeseen calamities.

The two travellers passed their time in the most pleasing conversation; both communicated every minute something to each other that was highly satisfactory, and De Gernier took advantage of the moment, and asked Monsieur St Merville the best route to take to discover the family mansion of the Count de Gras.

The worthy divine gratified his desires, and adding to his former knowledge, he feared not to reach the place of his destination with safety.

Fatigued by his day's journey, he now wished the worthy pastor good night, and retired to soft repose.

It afforded Monsieur St Merville inexpressible pleasure to witness the expanded mind of

De Gernier ; and he represented him as a youth of a great deal of experience, which was of double advantage to him ; for in general it comes at a period when it is of little use to the possessor,—its concomitant being old age.

He admired his ingenuousness, his magnanimity, and his noble pride ; and the peculiar expression of his countenance plainly told him that his heart was the seat of every social virtue.

His eyes beamed with extensive knowledge, and his heart was dilated with discriminate sensibility and heroism ; and contempt of fear on the one hand, mildness and generosity on the other, marked the tenor of his conduct.

Scarce had the morning dawn trembled on the landscape, ere our hero arose from his couch, and was prepared to prosecute his journey.

From the intelligence of the worthy prelate, and the rustic blunders of the landlord at the inn, he was enabled to pursue his route to the place of his destination.

His mind was occupied by his hopes and fears of discovering the family mansion, and even if he did, of finding the worthy count and Leonora, and he was also much concerned to witness the extreme degree of dejection which marked his spirits ; and was also apprehensive that his visit to the chateau might be productive of increased anguish, as it would certainly remind him of the former days of his splendour, and each circumstance in painful succession would recall the past endearments of his life.

His fears concerning the health of his adorable Leonora also quickly followed. He thought she was ill, and that revisiting the scenes of her nativity was too much for her.

Her delicate sensibility rose first to his imagination : he pictured her weeping over the scenes of her juvenile pleasures, soothing the affliction of her venerable and aged father and giving him all the consolation which the warmest affection could bestow.

Whilst travelling on he mused on the sacred love which she bore towards him, and was anticipating with delight the probable consequences which would ensue from the presentation of the title-deeds to the Count de Gras.

That infinite and exquisite happiness which he so justly deserved, he fondly thought that he should now enjoy as the fruits of his long forbearance and his tender love, for never could affection be stronger than that which he bore towards the amiable Leonora.

He indulged himself in these thoughts all the way, till he at last arrived at the village, which was about three leagues from the chateau.

The sun was now on the eve of setting ; the grand luminary resembled a brilliant ball of fire, and as the eye gazed on its splendour in the most ecstatic delight, it lost itself behind the boundless horizon, involving the west in one general glory, the view of which was peculiarly beautiful through the underwood of the forest, which was shaded with a roseate hue.

He ascended a steep hill ; having gained the summit of which, nature offered one of the most sublime and enchanting views, for his eyes cast themselves on one of the most beautiful valleys he ever beheld.

Extensive woods of fir, pine, larch, chesnut, and beech, swept down on each side of the hill to its base, giving all their pomp of shade to the objects which immediately adjoined it.

In the midst of the valley was situated a romantic little village, the rustic aspect of which was astonishingly fine ; the spiry steeple of the church, the gentle murmur of a stream which stole along below, the rich tints of the forest, all heightened by the splendour of the setting sun, concluded a scene of infinite grandeur and sublimity.

A few detached cottages were smoking on the edge of the forest ; groups of sheep were seeking their evening folds, and the birds sung most sweetly. He paused, and heard the vespers of a neighbouring convent ; his mind was wrapt up in the deepest contemplation, and a few rustic villagers were playing on the green which fronted the houses.

Their happy state, and comparative freedom, afforded him the highest sources of reflection.

He now descended the hill, and was not long before he gained the inn, which, though small, was comfortably fitted up, and afforded him very decent accommodation, as he proposed passing the night there.

Just before he entered the yard, the village clock beat the ninth hour.

The rustics had now just finished their pastoral games.

The innocence of their countenances, the simplicity of their manners, and their seeming strict integrity of principle, greatly pleased him.

He watched their motions in their rural dances, and was vastly pleased with their vivacious steps, and the languishing softness of their music.

They paid De Gernier the highest compliments, as they were awed by the presence of so noble and so commanding a stranger.

He received their rustic attention with heartfelt satisfaction, and gave them some bottles of wine to regale themselves, which they all thankfully received.

He now proceeded to the inn, having received the most pure and the most unalloyed pleasure from the humble sooty of the rustic villagers.

Having finished his supper, he went to the stable to look at his horse.

The moon was now ascending above the horizon, and its silver rays were reflecting the most grateful shade on all around. The concave of heaven was spangled with myriads of stars, its serenity was unclouded, and the nightingale was pouring forth her nightly complaint in the most tender strain.

The rustic community were now closing their eyelids in sleep, the friendly tribute of the toll of the day—the luxury of fatigue.

The landlord now came in to see if his guest was comfortable, and De Gernier took advantage to ask him a few questions concerning the chateau.

The landlord described with feeling the time the poor Count de Gras departed from the family mansion, but never mentioned anything concerning the Marquis de St Puffet.

De Gernier was much pleased to reflect, that he had now about his person those very papers which would restore the property to the family. For when minds are prone to virtue, they accelerate as much as possible the completion of its object, and they do not defer it, nor render their toil at once a dull and lifeless exertion.

The landlord gave our hero many anecdotes of the family, extolling in the highest degree their signal virtues ; indeed the landlord's tribute of praise was only the echo of that which he had constantly observed.

He also commented largely on the universal good which the count did, and also on the sorrow and anguish which his departure occasioned to all around, who were wont to feel the influence of his benevolence, which in adversity was still unshilled.

He now drew a picture of the base Marquis de St Puffet, who, instead of lending an ear of compassion to the poor, insulted their wants, and spurned with contemptuous disdain their humble and limited petitions.

This plainly shows us how apt human nature is to own that sympathetic approbation which we must all feel for any good which another individual does ; for, although we have not the spirit of liberality instilled into our minds, we nevertheless cannot refrain from owning it in others. But there is a time when blessings bestowed upon individuals are not felt till their author is estranged from us ; we then feel his goodness in its true sense, perhaps from the conviction of our absolute want of it. Exactly so did the people feel on the departure of the count, which was sincerely lamented by all around, for he lived in the bosoms of the people, and was adored by all ; they were ready and ever anxious to detail with prolixity his many eminent, his many great virtues. Indeed they were all awed when they were opposed to his presence, for he added to the purest principles of integrity a most dignified countenance and towering form. His gait was majestic, and his manners were as fascinating and pleasing as his features were comely and manly. Indeed the landlord did justice to his merits.

De Gernier now retired to bed, giving the inn-keeper strict orders to call him early in the morning.

He passed a sleepless night, and his ideas wandered from subject to subject, as his fancy was alternately indulging itself on the past scenes of his life, and also those of the count.

He thought of Leonora, and also imagined that she was ill, which operating strongly on his mind, made him very uneasy. His ideas wandered from the cradle to manhood, from the field of battle to tender love and to Leonora, the object of his fond solicitude.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Ask the faithful youth,
Why the cold wreath of her whom long he loved,
Draws his lonely footsteps, at the silent hour,
To pay the mournful tribute of his tears.” —ZIMMERMANN.

Long before the grey twilight of morn had dawned he arose from his sleepless couch, and with a thundering voice awoke the landlord, who was still reclining his head on Morphæus's soft pillow.

He immediately obeyed our hero's summons, and dressing himself he waited on him.

De Gernier having now arranged all for the remainder of his journey, he wished the inn-keeper good morning, and pursued his course.

The sun was now just ascending above the horizon, the fleecy clouds which now floated on the blue concave, as the glorious orb pierced them with his fiery darts, began first to blush, then to redden, and lastly to be involved in one universal glow. The faint expression of the moon was still perceptible, but was shaded into a silvery tint. The balmy freshness of the morning, the sweet scents that floated on the air, the universal stillness of the scene, the morning carol of the watchful lark, revivified his soul, and elevated it to the contemplation of the most grand and sublime ideas.

The grandeur of the scene was excessive; but as soon as he travelled slowly onwards the pleasing calm died away, and the busy world was awakened to its daily toil. The labourers were sallying forth to prepare for their accustomed exertion.

The cattle were grazing, and the whole creation was awake. One of the most beautiful days that ever shone on the valley of St M—— was now experienced, and to a beautiful mildness and calm serenity succeeded a sultry heat, and the beams of the sun were darting forth its warmth with its wonted energetic force.

The flowery turf, the verdure of the valley, added to the contrasted aspect of the hoary mountains and forest of pine, exhibited a fine piece of romantic scenery, which marked the whole aspect of the country from the village where he lodged to the mansion of the Count de Gras.

He now came in sight of the chateau, whose turreted battlements and grey summits were now clearly perceived rising in majestic grandeur above the tops of an aged forest, in the midst of which it was situated.

He now advanced to the great gate, and rang the bell loudly. The pause was solemnly impressive, added to the rumbling noise of the sound, which now died away in the air.

The porter now came to the gate, and answered the summons.

He inquired for the Count de Gras, and giving the venerable domestic his name, he was ushered into the hall, where sat the count and the beauteous Leonora, who had not yet finished their breakfast.

The unexpected meeting was of course marked by the most unbounded joy and rapture on each side, and Leonora flying to his embrace, he locked her closely in his arms.

When the first gust of pleasure and joyful surprise had subsided on all sides, he proceeded to give the count the history of his late adventures, the manner in which he found the house on his return from Paris, and also begged the count to give him the reasons which instigated his departure from the cottage, which the worthy man instantly did.

He in return gave him the history of all that had happened since his absence; and it was his intention to have delivered to him the title-deeds on the spot, but then, as he was not yet acquainted with the remaining part of his life, he reserved them for some future period; he therefore as yet kept the count in perfect ignorance of the reasons which dictated his sudden departure, and also the good which it was productive of.

The count of course eagerly interrogated him on the subject of his departure, to which he made reply, that he was sorry that particular circumstances would not allow him to satisfy his desire, till after he had acquainted him with the remaining part of his life, of which he was yet perfectly ignorant.

The count was naturally much amazed at this seeming mysterious air which enveloped

the manner of his friend, yet he was resigned to his wretched fate ; for, long tossed to and fro on the troubled ocean of life, he was accustomed to meet the vicissitudes of fortune with fortitude and patience ; he never murmured at the divine dispensation, and thought that all was ordered for the good which the sovereign Dispenser sent.

De Gernier now proceeded to give his dear Leonora a slight account of his journey, which greatly amused her ; but when she asked him the reasons which dictated his unexpected journey, he maintained a stern silence, and requested her to cease asking him further questions on that point, as he could not give her any reply at present, and concluded by saying that time would explain the mystery, and bring good out of seeming evil.

The juvenile pair now took a walk in the most romantic part of the forest.

Having passed the avenue, and going into the wood, he paused to contemplate the proud grandeur of the lordly mansion, whose time-worn battlements, grey turrets, and moulderling stone walls, greatly astonished him.

Leonora joined in the same sympathetic surprise and serious emotion.

The castle rose on the summit of a hill, in the midst of a thick wood of pine, larch, fir, and chestnut, which were intermixed with ash, sycamore, and cypress.

The forest swept down to the base of the hill on each side. From the avenue was seen a rough and beautiful canal, which was nearly lost by the thickness of the shade of the trees, except where art had formed a small aperture to see the enchanting spectacle, and also to visit the vessel and white sails on the water. On one side of the hill the river appeared in the valley with the majestic appearance of the forest, which shrouded all in gloom ; on the other was seen the chateau, which reared its proud grandeur high, and frowned in sullen majesty on all around, bidding defiance to any who dared to invade its solitary reign.

The sombre hues of the fir, sweeping down to the margin of the river, gave a good effect to the scenery around.

The sun was now on the eve of setting, and the scene was solemnly fine ; part of the grey and antiquated aspect of the mansion was lighted up by the splendour of the west, whilst the remaining features were involved in dizzy obscurity.

A crimson glow shaded the whole of the forest ; the water was beautifully clear, which also reflected the blushing horizon, and a vessel which floated on its surface peeped through an avenue in the forest, and was exhibited more strongly to the eye by the light of the setting sun.

"How august ! how impressive is this scene !" exclaimed De Gernier. "How deep, how majestic is the solemn appearance of nature at this moment !"

"Astonishingly fine indeed," replied Leonora ; "I had not the least conception of such infinite, such unbounded grandeur. This place seems more like one of those fairy palaces which we read of in romance than reality. I am much struck with the gorgeous structure, impenetrable grandeur, and venerable aspect of the noble edifice ; and also much more with the wild, the romantic scenery in the forest. Here, indeed, true delights and social happiness can be found, and not in the maddening strife of the world, its crowded intercourse, and peopled commerce."

"How sorry must have been the poor count to leave such grandeur !" resumed De Gernier ; "and especially by such villany and unexampled baseness !"

"Ah ! my dear fellow, do not recal fresh images of grief and anguish in my mind ; rather let them sleep in silence."

The agitation and visible emotion which touched the features of De Gernier, plainly spoke the language of sorrow for having been the cause of fresh anguish to his dear Leonora.

"Never," exclaimed De Gernier, having suppressed his former emotions, "did I witness a more truly beautiful or romantic view ! How solemnly impressive is that frowning aspect of the stately chateau, which a little while since was lighted by the splendour of the setting sun, and is now shrouded in deadly gloom. It seems to stand the sovereign building of the forest, and reigns in undisputed and sullen majesty."

The trees bent their heads mournfully forward, the waving grace of the ash, and the pendent foliage of the willow, all declared their submission, and owned its solitary right.

"How fine is this amphitheatre in the forest ! how towering the form of these larches. How fine is the contrast between the dark hue of the cypress and the light shade of the tender birch. View the majestic fir, the deep embowering elm, the umbrageous beech, and the gigantic trunk of the venerable oak, which, stretching its unwieldy arms wide over the

surface of the ground, reminds me of its having long withstood hoary winter's heavy siege."

"Truly, my dear Leonora, do I acquiesce with you, in the sincerest sentiments of cordiality, in the admiration of this solemn, this august spectacle; but the dams are beginning to fall, and the sun has long paid the tribute of nature, and I think it high time that we should both repair to the mansion."

"Yes, I think it time to go in," replied Leonora, "for I feel the cold."

The two juvenile lovers returned to the chateau, having indulged in one of the finest views that ever presented itself.

The worthy count, on seeing them coming up the venerable avenue of trees, whose shade was now so congenial with his feelings, went out to meet them, and also expressed much satisfaction that De Gernier was so pleased with the situation of the chateau.

The count informed De Gernier that he had some difficulty in gaining admission; but having previously communicated the circumstances which instigated his visit, he was suffered to go to the chateau unmolested, during the period which the marquis was away.

Having gained the mansion, the count gave De Gernier a letter for his perusal.

The contents were as follows:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—As many months have elapsed since I last had the pleasure of writing to you, I now resume my pen to write in a more pleasing strain. My object is to inform you that I have gained the most satisfactory information respecting the Marquis de St Puffet, who I find is a most unprincipled villain, and is the very person who has robbed us of our paternal domain. Nothing but revenge, ah! the most sweet revenge, can satisfy me; and the price of his blood shall repay me for his unexampled baseness. The manner in which I became acquainted with this intelligence is very strange; but I have learnt for certain, that this villain obtained the title-deeds from Monsieur L'Oiseau, the gentleman who eloped with my aunt. When I see you, I will explain many things relative to this mystery; but I trust, before this circumstance occurs, an ample restoration of the property will take place. In doing it, if success does not crown my just exertions, I will at least die in the attempt.

"Your affectionate son,

"H. GRAS."

The Count de Gras, on presenting the epistle to De Gernier, naturally betrayed the most violent symptoms of sorrow, and fear for the life of his son.

The epistle, as it alarmed De Gernier, also afforded him infinite satisfaction, in the reflection that he should have such a strong friend in Henry, in supplanting the unjustifiable claims of the marquis.

We now account for the silence which Henry was forced to maintain with his sister, and it was through the intelligence of his son that the count was first informed that the marquis had seized the chateau; which information, it may be remembered, was early communicated to De Gernier, when the count first disclosed to him the gay scenes of his former life.

We must not yet inform our readers how Henry became acquainted with this intelligence, as other circumstances must be previously explained.

The count's mind, as may be naturally expected, was greatly disturbed by the epistle which he had received from his son, as it was couched in such resolute terms. He reflected also on the disadvantages in gaining victory over so potent a foe as the marquis, who being surrounded by impenetrable greatness and strong popularity, poor Henry's weak force would be but ill directed against the insolence of power, the prejudice of passion, and the strength of interest.

The poor count shuddered as he anticipated with horror the consequences which would ensue; for his son, young and puffed up with noble family pride, could ill brook the frowns of insolence and the cruelty of power.

De Gernier commiserated the distress of the worthy man, and hoped that the worst consequences would not ensue; but, to relieve his drooping spirits, he informed him that he had something of infinite importance to communicate to him.

The good old man, anxious to find out any light amidst the darkness of the mysteries which attended the family, obeyed the summons of his friend. But the hero informed him, that previous to his communication he must acquaint him with the remaining part of his life, beginning at the part from which he was so suddenly and so abruptly called away.

The worthy count gladly obeyed him, and they both stepping into an adjoining room, De Gernier began thus:—

"Continuation of the History of De Gernier's Life."

" You may probably remember the grief I told you which I experienced when arriving at the cottage of my father, in which I was nourished and educated, and where I left my parents. I found it destitute of its owners. My father, I was informed, had left the cottage a long time, and the only intelligence which I could gain from the domestic of the family who now occupied the house, was that he had not been seen there since his departure.

" It is impossible, my dear sir, to do justice to the feelings which I experienced; they indeed mock the power of description. I asked the servant to introduce me to his master, which he did. The interview was of course most painful to me. The occupier of the small cottage being a generous, sensible, and domestic man, was much struck with my situation, and gave me some advice which was calculated to raise my drooping spirits; but worn-out with anguish, I heeded not his commiseration. He did not only point out the best plan to follow, but liberally offered me a temporary asylum in his house; but I was resolved to seek my father, despite of all troubles and perils.

" Here the worthy man, whose name was Monsieur Barné, damped the glow of my enthusiasm by informing me that Monsieur L'Oiseau had informed him that, having lost his son in battle (as some had reported, together with the circumstance of not having heard from him, which his dreadful suspicion confirmed), he determined to seek comfort in retirement by leading a solitary life.

" Your venerable parent is now," added the charitable man, " far from the reach of mortals, and sequestered in some lonely spot, far away from the misery, intrigue, and sad sorrow of this vain world. He only took with him one domestic, the faithful companion of his sorrows, and the sharer of all his toils and vicissitudes." Here, as may be expected, I gave way to the effusion of anguish, but informed Monsieur Barné that, highly warmed with gratitude as I was, for his generous offer, I could not avail myself of it, as I was resolved, despite of all perils, to seek my ever honoured parent.

" That will be impracticable," resumed the worthy man, " for your father is gone to one of the forests in the low countries, which being so extensive you will find it impossible to find him." But I still persisted in my resolution in seeking my father, despite of the strong arguments which were opposed by Monsieur Barné; but I partly acquiesced with some of the wishes of the worthy man, for I agreed to take shelter under his roof till circumstances would enable me to commence my painful pilgrimage; but not content with this, he wished me much to live with him; and my being long harassed with misfortune would probably have induced me to grant his request, had powerful motives not compelled me to go to other regions. The evening was now drawing on, and I determined, when all the family should have retired to repose, to visit the tomb of my mother, as the churchyard was not far from the cottage; for Monsieur Barné, amidst the budget of dismal, had also informed me, that my father lost his wife soon after my departure, which no doubt occasioned her death, added to the rumour of my having been slain in an engagement. Thus, my dear count, the ill-fated report of my having been killed in battle was productive of the most exquisite misery, the death of my dearly beloved mother, and the exile of my honoured and revered father. When all the family were hushed into deep repose I unlocked my door, and began my melancholy pilgrimage to the churchyard where I was informed my mother was interred.

" The moon had long ascended the horizon, and was shining in cloudless majesty; her silver beams reflected a good light, and pointed out the pathless solitudes of the forest through which I had to pass. I now came in sight of the church: the clock, with hollow and solemn note, beat the midnight hour. The dying sound, as it passed away on the western gale, was awful and impressive to a degree. I crossed the lawn before the yard, and was soon amongst the haly ground of skulls which had long mouldered into dust. I now came in sight of my mother's tomb: the sad sombre shade of the melancholy yew was waving its noble branches over the top. I read the inscription, and falling down on my knees kissed the tomb which was erected as a frail memorial of the existence of my mother, and drew from my heart the most unfeigned grief. The inscription was neat and plain, and from what I could collect, my mother had been dead about a year and a half after my departure from the cottage. The

solemn grandeur of the church, the august pomp of the forest which enveloped it, the chaste glory of the silver orb of night, and the tender feelings awakened by the sight of my mother's tomb, recalled in my mind her former society, and also elevated my ideas to the most sublime conception. I took out the miniature which my father had given me, and bathed it with tears.

"At this moment, my dear sir, all earthly things seemed mean and contemptible. I wished to join my father, and there find in a mutual solitude that comfort which I sought in vain."

Here the count was visibly oppressed with grief, but recovering himself, begged De Gernier to proceed.

"Having passed an hour in this serious and awful manner, I returned to the cottage, my mind being very much agitated, but still much eased from the pleasure which I experienced. I found my way home through the forest with the help of the moon, which was still shining in unrivaled lustre.

"Having gained the humble mansion, I crept to my room as slowly as I could, and there gave full vent to my reflections. I passed, as may be expected, a most restless night, and the spirits of departed goodness haunted me all the time. I felt a kind of sacred awe for futurity arising from my nightly visit. My ideas, from earthly things, soon rose to a heavenly nature, and as my imagination soared through the regions of space, I anticipated the pleasure which myriads of beings experience in the presence of their Creator. I awoke at an early hour the next morning. The parlour, the shrubbery, the garden, and the little well-known arbour, where I was wont to spend many happy hours with my mother, and particularly the last evening previous to my departure, were fresh in my memory, and in painful succession reminded me of my juvenile pleasures. From the mansion to the fields, the mortal transition was rapid: with what pleasure did I revisit these scenes of infantine delights! delights to be no more experienced! ah, which for ever will be foreign to my breast!

"The parlour in which my mother was wont to sit and work was now desolate and forlorn: it seemed bereft of its former endearment, and destitute of all comfort. The appearance of Madame and Clara Barné interrupted my painful review. When they approached me I bowed respectfully, and on the former asking me if I had passed a good night's rest, I answered, better upon the whole than I had reason to expect. I was not long in the company of the fair ere the generous host made his appearance. He shook me by the hand in the most friendly manner, and asked me how I slept. I made the same reply which I did to his wife. Breakfast being now ready we all proceeded to the parlour, and I had an opportunity of observing the cast of Clara's features, which were rustically pretty. A smile of innate goodness played on her cheek and animated her countenance. Her manners were innocently modest and bashfully reserved; her address carried with it a sort of simplicity of expression and frankness in diction that plainly discovered that she had not passed her time in the gay and dissipated scenes of Paris, but had been educated among the genuine rustics. Her manner being awkward and pastoral before strangers, plainly carried with it an air of candidness which discovered that there was no guile or duplicity in her conduct; no faiseuse occupied her mind, no wily deceit engaged her heart, her principles were regulated by nature, and she imitated her as much as she could in all her actions.

"Madame Barné was a middle-aged woman, and had been long tossed to and fro on the conflicting ocean of life; had experienced many vicissitudes, and with them some fortunate events, which had materially impaired her constitution. She appeared a keen, sensible, quick, and penetrating woman, of good talent and good discrimination. She was good-natured, mild, and compassionate; had lived to see the world; but lamented in maturity the unfavourable opinion which her judgment had forced her to draw.

"Monsieur Barné in goodness and in virtue was 'All in all'; for never did there exist a more strictly just and amiable man. He was sincere to his friends, disinterested in popular affairs, benevolent to the poor, and impartial in the capacity of a magistrate, which office he served, to the joy, to the honour, and satisfaction of the surrounding neighbourhood. He was sorry to find that I was resolved on leaving him, and having wished the family adieu, I took my leave, promising at the same time, that on the event of my not finding my father, I would renew my visit at the cottage, and make a much longer stay.

"I then travelled over the Netherlands, in hopes of finding my honoured parent, as Monsieur Barné informed me that he intended taking up his residence in one of the forests in those regions; but all my endeavours to find him were useless.

" My spirits, as you may suppose, were very drooping, and they continued in the same manner ; I passing my time in the most lifeless monotony, and seeking in vain for my father in the most gloomy recesses.

" I passed whole days and nights in the forest, and also at the peril of being devoured by the wild beasts ; but so strong was the inducement of filial affection that I heeded them not.

" Months passed in the same fruitless manner, and being weary and worn out with toil and disappointment, I returned to the cottage, where I was most kindly welcomed by Monsieur Barné and his family, more than three years having elapsed since my first departure from the cottage.

" I was sorry to find, on entering the cottage, that Madame and Clara Barné had gone to Paris, it being the first time that Clara had taken advantage of an invitation, which was repeatedly sent her by her aunt. Monsieur Barné sympathised with me most feelingly on my wretched state, but consoled me by saying, that he made no doubt that he had long bid adieu to all terrestrial things, as his health was in the last stage of decline when he left the cottage, and of course sorrow and his journey would accelerate his dissolution, which, poor man, considering the magnitude of his troubles, would in some measure have been a good release. I acquiesced with the language of my friend, and having passed some time with Monsieur Barné, and growing weary of an idle life, I re-entered the service.

" I entered the regiment which your son was in, whom I remember perfectly well ; and if you had previously informed me of his regiment, I might have prevented the disaster (and indeed now hope), which he will be probably exposed to by the marquis."

Here the Count de Gras shed a profusion of tears ; but stifling his anguish as much as he could, begged De Gernier to proceed :

" I had not been long in the regiment before the colonel (who was the Marquis de St Puffet), expelled me from the corps, for examining into some old manuscripts, the history of which I believe I have previously informed you of. I, of course, after my expulsion, endeavoured to gain satisfaction, but in vain ; I tried to find out in what manner he became possessed of the papers, but could not gain the slightest intelligence. I imagined that he had seduced my mother, murdered my father, and robbed the cottage ; but his power and interest denied any redress, which I sought for my injured feelings.

" He triumphed, despite of all laws, human and divine, and I was obliged to submit humbly to my fate.

" I then exchanged into a regiment which was stationed at Paris, thinking that their gay scenes might perhaps remotely tend to dispel the gloom of my spirits, and dissipate the languor of melancholy, but in vain ; the idea of my long-lost parent haunted my imagination, and threw a shade of dejection over my spirits, which softened all my actions, cooled my passions, and mellowed my judgment. Yet time, which follows with unconcern its monotonous course, mitigated the sorrow of my days, and instigated me to court scenes of pleasure, and it was in the first party which I ever went to, that I had the infinite pleasure of first meeting the Countess de Santá, who afterwards paid me the greatest attention.

" I have now detailed the leading particulars of my life, and proceed to acquaint you with something at which your heart will shudder, but which will nevertheless be the means of being ultimately most satisfactory to you."

The count's spirits were now so much agitated that he could hear no more, and begged De Gernier to repeat the remaining part the ensuing day, which he promised to do.

CHAPTER VII.

" Conscience, what art thou ? thou tremendous power !
Who dost inhabit us without our leave,
And act within ourselves, another self.

How dost thou light a torch to future deeds ?
Make the past, present, and future frown !
How, ever and anon, awake the soul,
As with a peal of thunder, to strange horrors,
In this long, restless dream of wretched life."

THE count's spirits were much agitated by the account of De Gernier ; his integrity, and his affection for Leonora rose strongly to his mind ; and the distress which he discovered at the death of his mother strongly proved his delicate sensibility.

Monsieur L'Oiseau, the gentleman who eloped with his sister, also presented himself to his

perturbed imagination, and was heartily welcomed. He was now sorry that he did not willingly and cordially receive him into the family, and thus have prevented a multiplicity of misfortunes, which have since taken place.

The rigid honour, interesting address, and affectionate solicitude of De Gernier, was also another spring of the most delicate reflection, and he also wished greatly to know what it was of such importance, which he had to communicate to him; but he consoled himself by reflecting that a few hours would inform and ease him of his suspense.

De Gernier took another walk with Leonora in the evening, where he had full opportunity of viewing the romantic forest and chateau, whose grey turrets, frowning battlements, and slender watch tower, greatly pleased and delighted him. He walked with Leonora in some of the most beautiful parts of the forest, till the sun sunk into the lower world, whose rays shaded the horizon with a saffron glow.

The union of idea and sympathy of sentiment was still marked by our juvenile lovers; time nor trouble had not impaired their affection, but strengthened it with indissoluble bonds. Indeed worldly vicissitudes had so tempered it, that it was mellowed into the most sacred affection, lasting in its end, and fervent in its warmth. Each word they said was expressive of innate worth, and their society materially contributed to dispel the lifeless monotony of grief. He told Leonora that the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed would not allow him to acquaint her with the object of his late departure, and also many other things which he wished to do, but that he would acquaint her with all the earliest opportunity.

This greatly depressed her spirits, but with the most mild submission she ceased to grate the feelings of her lover any more by her childish questions.

The damps of night beginning now to fall, and its shades to thicken, it induced our young couple to gain the mansion, being much pleased with their ramble.

On coming up the avenue they heard a loud and violent ringing. On the sound catching De Gernier's ears, he discovered the most violent emotions, his spirits were much agitated, and his countenance was fixed in the paleness of death. The idea that the person who was now ringing was the Marquis de St Puffet, suggested itself to his perturbed imagination, and perhaps come after him, having heard of his having the title-deeds.

Leonora asked him why his looks were so much agitated.

He remained for a time insensible, not a reply escaped his lips, but his fears were soon appeased, when the domestic brought him a letter from a courier, which required an immediate reply.

De Gernier was very much astonished at the receipt of the epistle, and sending back an immediate reply by the courier in great haste, as the letter required it, he stifled his astonishment.

"I hope this will not call you from us," said Leonora in the meekest tone of voice.

"I am sorry to say that it will instantaneously," resumed De Gernier.

Poor Leonora being unable to control her feelings, gave vent to a copious discharge of tears.

De Gernier communicated the sad tidings to the Count de Gras, who suffered him to depart (which nevertheless occasioned him great sorrow), being cheered that his visit was dictated by necessity, and that it would be ultimately productive of good to all parties.

Leaving De Gernier to himself, we now return to the case of Henry, the Count de Gras's son.

The earliest information which he obtained of the marquis's baseness was from De Gernier, at the time of his expulsion, and since that time he watched narrowly his conduct; and the very servant who found the title-deeds in the forest, told him all about it, and also remarked to Henry, that he increased his establishment, and gained possession of the chateau from that very day, which singular coincidence operated strongly on the mind of the worthy count's son.

Henry, on being acquainted with this, added to the former intelligence of his friend De Gernier, gave his father the whole history of all which he knew. Indeed, finding the marquis to be a villain, he determined to seek redress by vengeance.

The count and Leonora, as may be expected, naturally betrayed the greatest symptoms of sorrow for the departure of De Gernier, especially as it took place at so unfavourable a crisis.

The count considered his journey to the place of his destination as essential to promote the end of something which no doubt would be ultimately beneficial to the family, or else he would

have previously mentioned it; for he was far too honourable and ingenuous to keep them in ignorance of anything which would injure their peace.

We now return to explain the motives which induced him to quit the mansion in such haste, which was in consequence of a letter which he received from Monsieur Duclôs, who wrote to him from Paris, to meet him there immediately, and without the least possible delay.

The nature of the letter was such as forced him to obey the summons of his friend, who during all the troubles and vicissitudes of life had amply proved the warmth of his sincerity.

The epistle which the unfortunate Duclôs sent to him, was written in the following terms:—

"Monsieur Duclôs to Monsieur P. de Gernier."

"DEAR SIR,—I have scarcely sufficient strength to inform you of the ultimate end of my crimes, and the sad situation in which the rigour of the law has placed me. I was this week apprehended and confined in a prison; within whose gloomy walls I am now writing. I was arrested by the order of the Marquis de St Puffet, whose cunning discovered that I was in an obscure part of the capital. My trial comes on in a few days, and the officers have been with me, and have informed me that if I can depose anything which will tend justly to depreciate the character of the marquis, they have recommended me to do it, as it may prove ultimately beneficial to me in promoting my discharge, or alleviating the rigour of that judgment which may be pronounced on my crimes. Now I request—I beseech you, my dearest friend, ah! the only real friend which I have in existence, to come and stand as my confessor; and also bear testimony to the baseness of the Marquis de St Puffet; for, although he has by his fraud and iniquity escaped the hands of justice and basked in the temporary sunshine of affluence and power, yet the day, I trust, is now come when all his infernal plots will be discovered, and nothing but the iron rod of justice will be uplifted to scourge him for his baseness. My only hope of existence relies on the confidence of your fidelity; therefore I pray you, my dearest friend, to obey this my last injunction; therefore, hoping that nothing will prevent you being at Paris to-morrow night, and, whilst racked by the severest torments of agony and despair,

"Believe me truly yours,

"J. M. Duclôs."

De Gernier, on the receipt of this letter, now saw what he sadly anticipated come to pass. But it was an admirable time for him to assist the measures of the unfortunate Duclôs, and also to promote the completion of his own, by exposing fully the marquis's baseness, and restoring ease, comfort, and tranquillity to the deeply injured Count de Gras.

That time which he had long wished was now come to pass; indeed, it exceeded his fondest expectations and his most sanguine desires; for he was most agreeably surprised, on reaching the prison wherein the wretched Duclôs was confined, to see Henry Gras, who had also arrived at Paris to fulfil the ends of his assertion, by laying before a court of justice the villainy of the Marquis de St Puffet.

The meeting between the three individuals was affecting beyond measure; no language can paint the horrors and fears of the one, or the fixed astonishment and sympathy of the others.

To one the sad Duclôs testified his sincerest thanks for the fidelity which he had discovered in executing his painful commands; to the other his inexpressible emotions of joy, at seeing the person he had so long wished for, and particularly at so strange a period.

The porter that led De Gernier to the cell of the condemned victim of guilt maintained a stern silence on all subjects which he proposed to him. He said, in a firm and hollow tone of voice, "Ask me no questions, for I cannot give you any reply; your order is, that I lead you to the criminal, which I will faithfully obey."

Astonished at the cool indifference and rigid severity of his manner, De Gernier proceeded with a cautious step to the door, when, grating on its massy binges, its unwieldy folding doors were presently thrown open, and discovered to the heart-stricken, though dauntless hero, the gloomy apartment of the miserable Duclôs.

"Black melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose."

He was seated in a dark corner of the cell, and his hands and feet were bound with heavy chains. A faint glimmering of a lamp, which was suspended from the ceiling,

"Served not to chase, but to disclose the night;"

it threw a horrible gloom on all around, darkened the sadness of the scene, and increased its misery.

Its faint rays threw a deadly gloom on the guilt-worn and emaciated visage of the unfortunate Duclôs.

De Garnier flew to the presence of the wretched man, and in the sincerest expressions of sorrow commiserated his miserable end.

So great was his transport of grief that he did not discover the stranger, who, at the approach of De Garnier, withdrew to a respectful distance; but not long was he kept in ignorance of his person, for he recognized in him his worthy and esteemed friend Henry Gras.

A scanty pittance of bread and water was Duclôs's diet, and a bundle of hard straw, scattered thinly on the ground, supplied the place of the downy softness of the feather.

But he considered his fare as sumptuous; ah! as a luxury; and his hard bed a couch of roses, in comparison with the torturing pangs of his agonizing conscience; for the conviction of having done wrong would intrude itself, and persecute him with its sharpest stings.

He made the most grateful and acceptable confession to his two friends, and his repentance was most sincere, heartfelt, and contrite.

He said to De Garnier, "Forgive me, my valuable, ah! my far injured friend! I once spurned your advice when blest with affluence, and little thought that the last time when I bid you adieu, your return would have welcomed me in a prison. Oh! painful reflection, that leads to what I was, by what I now am. O conscience, I sink beneath the burden of my crimes! But I hope that it is not yet too late—I have a few hours to live, and may they be employed in the awful reflection of eternity. Oh that my errors could be forgiven and forgotten! O ye immortal powers, that dive most deeply into the scale of man's frailty, that ye would look with an eye of compassion on me, and receive my contrite repentance! but I fear that the day is too far spent, and that there is no joy left for me. But yet I renounce all my former evil connections with the unfruitful works of darkness, and I sincerely repent of all my former wickedness—a beam of hope cheers my drooping spirits, and gives me a taste for something more than mortal."

"Behold in me, my honoured friends, the miserable end of gaming; it was the alluring vices of that evil propensity which first seduced my principles, and has now brought on the wretched termination of which you are eye-witnesses.—Oh that by my experience young men would grow wise, and abhor that hydra, gaming, and that they would be eye-witness of my sad fate. Enclosed within the walls of a gloomy prison, and racked by the horrid anticipation of approaching dissolution, would to God that the king of terrors would select me for the victim of his indifference; not to cheat justice of its right, but to throw an impenetrable veil over my crimes. But then, what would follow? Ah! painful reflection, it harrows up my very soul. But no more, my spirits fail me—I am weary—oh, I am growing sick—enough."

"You have, my dear friend, yet some causes which may distantly tend to palliate the guilt of your crime; distress on the one hand, and maddened by desperation on the other. The evil character of the marquis will be exposed, which will consequently do an act of goodness to the community at large."

"Calm your spirits, and I will exert all in my power to promote your interest," said Henry.

The two friends by mutual consent now repaired to the adjoining hotel, and both occupied the same apartment, that they might consult together on the affair of the wretched Duclôs, and also promote their own respective ends.

Both had such a multiplicity of circumstances to communicate to each other, that they paused, each ignorant what to advance first, till at length Henry broke the silence by informing De Garnier of the whole particulars relative to the marquis's baseness, the manner in which he found the title-deeds, and the circumstance of his having made good instantaneously his unjustifiable claims.

Indeed he acquainted him with every individual circumstance that had occurred, and concluded by adding, that the most affectionate spirit of justice had instigated him to wreak vengeance on the guilty and infatuated head of the marquis.

The history which De Gernier had to inform Henry was such as, from many circumstances, would most agreeably surprise him.

The delicate situation in which he was placed with regard to Leonora, his sufferings since he first left the army, and the many adventures he experienced since leaving the Marquis de St Puffet's regiment, and his actual possession of the title-deeds, which would be the means of putting a period to all Henry's noble wishes, were circumstances which were all so ultimately connected, that it was a matter of difficulty how to make the strongest impression on the mind of Henry by recounting them properly.

He proceeded by first informing him that after he had been expelled from the marquis's regiment, he re-entered the service, and gained a commission in a regiment which was then stationed at Paris.

He dwelt with energy on his interview with Henry's father, and also the intimacy which took place.

He paused whilst relating his affection for Leonora, and his spirits seemed alleviated by a reviving cordial when he informed him that his father, having approved of his affection, had invited him repeatedly to the chateau, and gave him his consent to crown the union, should affairs turn out prosperously.

The colour of Henry's face, during the narrative, alternately changed from a crimson flush to a deadly paleness.

Indeed it was more marked when he proceeded further, and informed him of the robbery of the wretched Duclôs, by which means he became possessed of the title-deeds, and also acquainted him with the circumstance of the marquis being absent from the family mansion, which of course gave the family ample time to visit the scenes of their former grandeur.

"I am astonished," said the impassioned Henry; and taking hold of De Gernier's hand, in an ecstasy of delight, exclaimed, "can I rely on all which you have said? If it be true, which of course it must be from your honourable assertion, happy am I to acknowledge you as my brother—the preserver of the peace of the family."

Now, in order to remove all ambiguity in the mind of Henry, De Gernier proceeded to give the whole account of his life, and discovered to him that his father was related to him, or rather he was related to the count by marriage.

Henry now shed tears, and clasping the waist of De Gernier with his extended arms, he leaned on his bosom, and there gave full vent to his delicate feelings.

Recovering from his violent emotion, he exclaimed:—

"Oh Providence! how beneficent art thou! indeed truly may I now say, as my reverend father was wont to do, the decrees of the sovereign Disposer of all earthly events are mysterious, and they often produce good out of seeming evil. Truly are thy words realized; oh happy period! now then, oh vile wretch, will thy wickedness be explored; now will thy infernal machinations be searched and explained. The day is now come when the hand of justice will uplift its iron rod to scourge those who have poured affliction upon the virtuous. But enough: not to waste my time in unavailing exclamations, let me express to you my sentiments of eternal fidelity for your praiseworthy exertions."

"Happy am I, my dear friend, that the connection which is distantly marked in the family, will be now maintained by your marriage with Leonora. How do I exult in the pleasing anticipation of so propitious an event! but I sincerely hope that wherewithal the poor unfortunate and deluded Duclôs will not suffer. Ah, little did I think that the elopement of my aunt with Monsieur L'Oiseau would be ultimately productive of such great and unexpected good! Ah, had my father been sensible of his goodness, he never would have pronounced so stern a decree upon his honourable pretensions. But no more the subject is too painful to prolong it."

The plan which Henry now laid down was not to communicate any intelligence to the Count till all the trial should be completed, unless his presence was required, which seemed ostensible that it would from the peculiar aspect of affairs.

Having therefore mutually agreed to keep the worthy man in ignorance of the whole of the proceedings, they now retired to repose, being much fatigued by the painful exertions of the day.

When the unfortunate Duclôs was left to himself, and to his miserable reflections, he con-

tempted the past scenes of his life as the potent effect of a dream, which, operating on his weak imagination, deluded his virtue, seduced his principles, and finally plunged him into the abyss of misery.

He awoke from his slumbers, and gazed upon his actions with sorrow and remorse. In his repentance, which was genuine, he anticipated with horror his approaching dissolution; yet still the faint idea that the united efforts of his friends might give him life in this world, and be the means of preparing him for a better, shot across like the transitory and feeble ray of an April sunshine.

The minds also of Henry and De Gernier were strongly tinctured with sorrow for the fate of the sad Duclôs, as his case was desperate, and the judgment which awaited him would perhaps be that which they mutually but too painfully anticipated.

Each arising from a disturbed night's rest, they immediately proceeded to the prison of the wretched victim of guilt, whose mind was tossed to and fro by the whirlwind of contending passions which struggled in his breast, and made him give vent to their pressure on the sight of his two friends.

He, with tears in his eyes, made a faint effort to speak, and all that he could articulate was, "Welcome, ever-faithful friends!" and then sunk back on the ground, quite overcome by his strong feelings.

Ere a few hours were elapsed, his body might be consigned to perish; and the awful idea that the hours, as they languidly rolled away, brought him nearer to that agonizing crisis which would probably determine his dissolution in this world, made him contemplate his state with a religious fear.

A solemn calm now pervaded his features, the grateful tribute of contrite repentance. The mild resignation which testified to his friends, and his hopes of eternity in saying, "That he should meet death with fortitude, being buoyed by the flattering hopes, that his prayers were heard, and his repentance accepted;" gave them infinite satisfaction in finding the wretched man so prepared for the world to come.

It afforded them the highest degree of pleasure to witness him so calmed at the approaching awful period.

Duclôs told them, that should that sentence be pronounced upon his crimes, which he deserved, and also which he justly expected, he should submit in humble resignation to the appalling decree, being cheered by the divine favour of Providence.

His looks, which before were distorted by fear, were now animated by religion, and mellowed into soft serenity, and a mild composure cast itself all over the surface of his countenance.

He now, in a firm but quiet tone of voice, thanked his friends for the genuine sincerity which they had discovered towards him in the last stage of his misery, and be fully assured them that he should carry with him to the grave the remembrance of their virtues and fidelity.

The two friends of Duclôs had now been in the prison about an hour, when the porter came to acquaint the wretched man that the court were awaiting his presence.

His looks upon this message betrayed no symptoms of fear, and he discovered a uniform monotony of aspect. He was undismayed at the terrific aspect and the towering form of the guard, who, marching with slow and solemn pace into the room, halted before his presence.

The serjeant immediately advanced and requested him to place himself between the ranks which he strictly obeyed.

Henry and De Gernier followed him with tears in their eyes, and a great mob was collected to witness the criminal.

He was insulted with no opprobrious language, and his dying spirit was not kindled into revenge by the sharp stings of the hissing mob—no, they rather pitied him, which hushed the clamours of popular indignation, and stifled the whispers of malevolence.

His downcast looks heeded not the commiserations of the populace, and his sensés slumbered in repentance for his crime.

His painful march was soon completed, for he was now placed before the tribunal appointed to examine into the nature of his guilt.

The first object which presented itself was the impressive form of the Marquis de St. Puffet, who, towering like a demi-god above the rest, commanded the most awful silence.

His guilt-penetrating eyes flashed fire on the tender soul of Duclôs, and he exulted in the most scornful revenge.

He was sating his vindictive spirit when the judge asked him the object of his robbery; and also if he was acquainted with the manner by which the Marquis de St Puffet became possessed of the title-deeds belonging to the family mansion of the Count de Gras.

Duclôs's mind, which was subdued by the question of the venerable judge, and also by the terror-striking appearance of the marquis, confessed the whole of the robbery; explained the reasons which induced him to do it, and also referred the superior to De Gernier, who actually had possession of the title-deeds.

The judge ordered De Gernier and Henry into court, who immediately advanced in front of the tribunal.

The marquis, on the sight of these two people, fainted away.

The judge was amazed: all thought that he had fallen down dead, and gazed on him in speechless affright.

This carried the strongest conviction to the mind of the judge, who was induced, by the first sight of the marquis, to apprehend that these two people carried an air of terror to his mind, from the probable motive of their having something to depose which would tend to calumniate his character.

When the marquis had recovered from his fit, and his powers of sensation were restored to him, he gazed on the countenance of his two persecutors with a wild look of horror. He now but too sadly perceived that his baseness would be exposed; and he but too well remembered that one of the men was the very individual whom he expelled from his regiment.

The judge, without further observing the anxiety and fear which clouded the countenance of the marquis, proceeded upon the cause.

He asked Duclôs if he had anything to depose by way of palliating the guilt of his crime; to which the unfortunate man replied in the negative; but added, that his distress, and the involved state of his affairs, instigated the commission of the crime.

The charge being fully established with regard to the robbery, the superior proceeded to examine the witnesses, who made depositions against the character of the marquis, all which were previously instigated by the interference of Duclôs, who finding that the marquis was an unprincipled villain, was determined, after having made the confession of his own guilt, to expose his, as he thought it was his duty to do it, from conscience and principle.

De Gernier was the first witness who appeared.

He arraigned him for having unlawfully seized the family mansion of the Count de Gras, and also for having expelled him from one of the regiments of the line of which he was the colonel, and for refusing to give the redress to his grievances which he required.

Henry Gras, the second witness, supported the charges, and maintained that the chateau which the Marquis de St Puffet had unlawfully seized was the legal possession of the Count de Gras, his father.

The judge having maturely weighed the respective depositions, requested them to prove their assertions, which they did; for De Gernier immediately produced in court the title-deeds, and Duclôs bore testimony to their being the very same which he received from the hands of the Marquis de St Puffet.

The charge was now indisputable; for the marquis having arraigned Monsieur Duclôs upon the charge of his having stolen from him the papers, which from his statement were the very same which were produced in court; it therefore followed as a consequence deduced from the predeposition, that they were the title-deeds of the Gras family, and which he had kept in secret, and claimed the right of the family mansion.

The matter being irrefragable, it required no further investigation; but the superior informed the court, that before he could pronounce any judgment, it was requisite that the Count de Gras, the owner of the family mansion, and to whom the title-deeds belonged, should make his appearance, to swear to the papers, and also to commit the Marquis de St Puffet as the robber of his property.

The court having now concluded, matters were arranged concerning the Count de Gras, whose presence was immediately required.

CHAPTER VIII.

"All present then uttered a terrified shriek,
All sunk with disgust from the scene."—LAWIS.

"Low on his fun'ral couch he lies
No pitying heart, no eye afford
A tear, to grace his obsequies."—GRAY.

The Count de Gras being at the family mansion, an express was sent to him, requesting his presence, to appear with the least possible delay, before the court of high justice, appointed to examine into the charges laid before Monsieur Duclôs and the Marquis de St Puffet.

The court was now deferred till the arrival of the Count de Gras.

The wretched Duclôs was sent back to his cell, and the haughty, proud, and vain Marquis de St Puffet, instead of revelling in splendid chambers, feasting at costly banquets, and sleeping on beds of roses, was conveyed to one of the most gloomy parts of the prison; a dark room, bread and water, and a couch of straw, were all that was allowed him. Now indeed was his pride humbled and vanity insulted; but still his blind apostacy broke out into more fierce bounds, and the only circumstance which now disturbed his imagination was the death of his wife, which event took place a few weeks previous to his trial.

His baseness occasioned her death; for the tender-hearted girl, who heard all his iniquity, and was eye-witness of his evil schemes, could no longer live with a man whose existence sickened her virtue and poisoned every social comfort. She died of a broken heart, being quite vanquished by her feelings, which the hard-hearted monster never took the least trouble to alleviate.

The idea of approaching dissolution now tortured the steeled soul of the marquis; but revenge, the most bitter revenge, still reeked in his mind; the most horrible idea entered his imagination. It was enough. Scarcely had the wicked thought entered his brain ere his fell purpose was fixed; yet still his fortitude was too weak, and he trembled with fear.

Not to dwell any more on the sad and untimely death of the wretched and ill-fated Agnes, we will dismiss this melancholy subject for the present, by observing that, upon a calm reflection, it was no more than what could be expected; for how could virtue be staved in the face by vice, or be hackneyed by its deluded principles? No, the coil was too hard, and she sunk beneath its pressure.

Her death was the only circumstance which softened the inhumanity of the marquis, for the consciousness of having done wrong betrayed his feelings.

But not long after the last sad duties were paid to her wretched remains, her memory flew from his breast, and terrestrial things engaged his mind.

Thus sad indeed was the end of the wretched Agnes, who, seduced and carried away by the insidious wiles of the marquis, finally perished by his baseness and cruelty.

The haughty monster in his cell discovered a uniform contempt of the situation in which he was placed; he laughed at the idea of annihilation, and thought that dissolution in this world would only render his soul more free and unfettered, and that an undisturbed and eternal sleep would follow. His guilt-bronzed cheek wore the same aspect, and the deepest, the direst revenge marked his features. He had enjoyed full power, and all his wishes had been gratified in this world; his diabolical plots were all productive of success, his authority was owned, and his will obeyed. He therefore, having been satisfied in all his ideas, and seeing that nearly his last day was now arrived, for other people crowded the court with fresh charges against his character, submitted to his fate with an unbending firmness and dauntless resolution.

The judge was an impartial man; he had heard and even seen a great deal of the marquis's baseness, and consequently was the more satisfied in scrutinizing with severity the subject of the deposition.

He was determined not to spare him, but act with honour, and at the same time to punish him according to the extent of the law, which, from the various depositions which were laid,

and the multiplicity of charges which were alleged against his character, would make it very severe.

The marquis requested the porter to allow him the privilege of pen, ink, and paper; which being allowed him, he made a large memorandum, which he placed next to his breast.

When De Gernier and Henry had gained their rooms, they mutually conversed on the successful termination of affairs; and it being judged advisable to send for the count, as was ordered by the court, the following epistle was sent to him by De Gernier, immediately after he had retired from the tribunal.

“ Monsieur Pierre de Gernier to the Count de Gras.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—Do not alarm yourself by the contents of this epistle, for I am forced to communicate to you that your presence is immediately required to attend at the court, which is appointed to examine into a charge brought by me, your son, and others, against the Marquis de St Puffet, for having illegally dispossessed you of your family mansion, and claiming it as his own. Your son is at Paris, and is in admirable health; I fortunately met him here, he having followed the wicked marquis with an intent to expose his baseness. I have not time to say anything more, only that you must positively be at Paris in twenty-four hours.

“ In great haste,

“ Most sincerely yours,

“ P. DE GERNIER.”

The express reached the chateau after the worthy count had been in bed a few hours.

The loud ringing of the bell awoke him, and he got up in an agony of despair, uncertain if it was the Marquis de St Puffet.

A deadly paleness spread itself over his terrified aspect; he ran to the room of the faithful Carlo, and there communicated his fears.

Carlo, who had just awoke from a sound sleep, gazed on the count for a moment, as if his senses were plunged into the most insane suspension; but soon recovering from his amazement, he dressed himself, and immediately obeyed the commands of his master, which were that he should discover who the stranger was with the least possible delay.

Leonora's repose was undisturbed, and she was ignorant of her father's fears, for Somnus had poured a soft oplate over her harassed mind, which lulled her senses into forgetfulness, and granted her the envied bliss of sleep.

The poor unfortunate count was not suffered to remain long in this dreadful uncertainty, for in a few minutes old Carlo returned with a note, written in an illegible hand, which he said was brought by a man who was in great haste, and was waiting for an immediate reply.

The poor count was still more astonished as he gazed at the superscription, and was still more at a loss whom to attribute as its author.

He now broke open the seal, and without reading the contents looked at the signature, and was agreeably surprised in finding that it was from De Gernier.

He now ran through the contents, each syllable raising his astonishment, till the last mysterious lines plunged his soul into the abyss of amazement.

The joy which he experienced was great indeed; and the idea that his son would be saved from the sad perils which he prognosticated would beset him in his combat with the evil and powerful marquis, and also that the family estates would be replaced into the hands of the right owner, which would likewise be the happy means of crowning the long wished for union of De Gernier and his daughter, elevated his spirits to the most gladdened sphere and the most fervent thanks.

He knelt down and acknowledged in the most religious manner the blessings of Almighty Providence.

But the letter enforcing most strictly the least possible delay, he ordered Carlo to saddle his horses, and go on before, in order to prepare fresh ones at the inns on the road.

Having made all possible haste, he arrived at Paris the next morning at nine o'clock, and inquiring for the apartments of Monsieur de Gernier and his son, he was ushered into the room.

The meeting was affecting : the count pressed his son to his breast, and suffered the bright gem of affection to twinkle in his eye.

Tears for awhile supplied the power of expression, till those senses which were suspended by various contending emotions were roused into active exertion.

Our two heroes briefly informed the worthy count of the whole of the proceedings of the court, and Henry communicated every little particular to his honoured father which could in any manner soothe his astonishment and wonder.

De Gernier acquainted him with the wretched case of Duclès, of the motives which twice induced him to quit the family mansion, and also informed him of the ultimate good which the robbery of the wretched Duclès was productive of.

" Oh ! Leonora," exclaimed the rejoiced man, " happy am I, then, that I shall be able at length to reward your generous and honourable affection with the hand of so magnanimous, so ingenuous a man ! "

When the count left the chateau he gave orders to a domestic to acquaint Leonora with the period at which he departed, and also left a letter, that he desired might be given to her the first thing in the morning, which would be the means of explaining the motives that induced the worthy man to set off in such haste, and would likewise ease his daughter's mind of a considerable portion of anguish, surprise, and suspense.

" Leonora has often thought of you, my dear sir, during your absence," said the count ; " and frequently languished in the soft cadence of grief for your hopeless situation. She thought that my decree concerning her fate was stern, and that the mysteries which veiled the happiness of the family were too palpable to be revealed ; but alas, poor girl, she is happily deceived.

" Your sister, my dear Henry," added the count, " spoke of you every night, and commiserated with gentle pity and affectionate solicitude your hard case. Alas ! poor girl, she has borne with fortitude a multitude of sorrows, which I anticipate with gladness will be speedily removed ; and I have amply to bless the Providence of Heaven, in having preserved from ruin the shattered remains of my broken constitution, to witness such multiplied, such unexpected bliss."

" Oh may you," exclaimed the two heroes, " yet live many years, and enjoy your restored property."

The worthy count's mind was transported by the most exulting passions ; he thought of his dear wife and his sister, and he severely repented for having behaved so harshly to the worthy Monsieur L'Oiseau.

A soft degree of melancholy shaded his joy, when the remembrance of his wife's death shot across his mind.

He now thought on the virtues of Monsieur L'Oiseau and his son, and but little thought at the time when he eloped with his sister, that he was sincere in his affection, or that his mind was noble, virtuous, and ingenuous. Had he but known his singular merits, he would not have behaved so sternly to him, but would have immediately favoured his delicate views. But the good are not always rewarded according to their merits, and many a virtuous mind is found in obscurity.

He now reflected on the integrity of De Gernier, and anticipated with rapture his approaching union with Leonora ; but then his heated imagination was damped by the cold reflection, that the worthy Monsieur L'Oiseau would not be present at the union, as, from the account of his son, it was most probable that he had long bid adieu to all terrestrial things, and was now enjoying the most perfect bliss, as the faithful reward of a good, charitable, and christian life.

To his son he meant to entail the family estate, as the reward of his virtues, which was also expressly wished by Henry Gras, which he said would only be repaying him for his staunch fidelity and genuine affection.

Henry and De Gernier proposed that the Count de Gras should accompany them to the cell of the wretched Duclès, which was agreed to by the worthy man.

The trio now proceeded to the prison.

They rang the large bell, which was suspended from the top of the huge iron gates. The porter now advanced, and asked them their commands.

They delivered their names, and having explained the purport of their visit, were admitted to the cell of the miserable Duclès.

The dark and gloomy aspect of the mouldering walls made the count shudder as he advanced, and still more so when the porter, having unbarr'd the door, led them into a dreary apartment, which was blocked up so as to exclude the light of the day.

The faint rays that issued from the glimmering lamp above supplied the place of the light of the sun; the death-like hue of Duclôs's countenance, and his wan and emaciated form, heightened the gloomy horrors of the prison.

Duclôs's listless soul was revived at the sight of his friends, and he was also much surprised to find them accompanied by a stranger, whose venerable look and interesting countenance induced him to suppose that it was a priest, who was come to prepare him for his last end.

But his surprise was great indeed when Henry introduced him as his father.

The venerable count advanced to the sad mortal, and uttering words of comfort, informed him that he was the owner of the chateau, the title-deeds of which had been productive of such mystery, fatality, and misery.

Duclôs hung down his head, and indulged in pensive melancholy.

The count tried to comfort him, but in vain; his case was desperate, and he had so worked himself up, that he was resolved to meet his fate with fortitude and resignation, as the only hopes of future salvation.

"I am sorry, sir," said the grief-distracted man, "that our second meeting should be in a prison. I did not remember you at first, but your countenance is now quite fresh in my memory, as I remember having had the pleasure of meeting you at the hospitable Countess de Sant's mansion, for whom I entertain the highest sense of esteem. Forgive my weakness and pardon my sad end. The very night which I left you at the countess's chateau I became a beggar, and it has been the dawn of my infamy.

"From evil company I acquired a sense of gaming,—gaming brought poverty—poverty dishonesty—dishonesty infamy—and infamy will now be crowned with its just deserts. Even suppose that I should escape the rigour of terrestrial laws,—a broken constitution, a ruined fortune, a shattered reputation, a frowning world, and a revengeful heaven, are left to bless my soul. May all those who really are possessed with amiable dispositions, learn from my severe example what misery and eternal perdition await those who follow the path of vice.

"Believe me, most honoured sir, that my feelings are more composed than what you can easily imagine, for being conscious of my guilt, I trust to the favour of heaven, and shall die in peace, being impressed with the lively idea that the all-pardoning mercy of God will accept my contrition, and favour my petitions."

"Certainly he will, my dear sir, and it is most praiseworthy in you to adopt the measures which you have done: your repentance is of too sincere a nature to be mistaken; and although human laws may exact severity, still will the divine favour of Providence lend an ear of compassion to your supplications. I had once great popularity, but I am afraid that family affliction, and my retirement from the gay scenes of the world, have made it slumber in forgetfulness, and have supplanted my authority; but at all events I will raise the interest of my friends in your favour, and endeavour at least to gain, if possible, a mitigation of your punishment," said the Count de Gras.

"Accept, my dearest sir, my warmest, my most unfeigned thanks; but I am afraid that my doom is fixed, and that fate wills me to die; but whatever be the decree of justice, I submit in humble resignation, for there will come a time when all good hearts will be made glad, every mystery explained, and every moral evil eternally done away; and may I be amongst the number that delight in the presence of the Lord!—but I fear not—my crimes are too great!"

Henry and De Gernier shed tears during the tender sympathetic conversation of the count and Duclôs, and they now asked the latter if he was ready, and prepared for his second appearance in court; and they gave him to understand that his fate was not so hard as he thought it was, as many circumstances would ultimately turn out to his favour, and tend to mitigate the punishment of his crime.

It was nevertheless pleasing to all, that whatever would be the termination of the guilt of Duclôs, to find him in a state so provided for eternity, was the most acceptable in the sight of God and the tribute of a good heart.

For Duclôs was not innately bad: had he been led to virtue, he would have been virtuous, but unfortunately his virtue was deluded, and bad company plunged his soul into ruin.

The hour of trial was now at hand ; each minute, as it passed heavily away, brought new emotions to the count's mind. He pitied the situation of Duclôs, ah ! sincerely did he pity it ; yet his commiseration was unavailing, for his fate would be decided in a few hours.

They had not been much longer in conversation ere the porter, as usual, came with the guard, and conveyed the miserable Duclôs to the tribunal.

His friends, now quite prepared for the event, supported him to the end of the room, where, being placed between the ranks of the guard, he marched with a slow pace to the court.

The mob was equally great as on the first occasion, and more particularly as the marquis was first conveyed to the high court of justice.

For Duclôs they all testified the same sentiments of pity, and amongst their commiseration were mingled a few dying sounds of hisses, which probably proceeded from the party of the marquis.

The count, who had formerly great interest in Paris, had so infused the minds of the people that they determined to sacrifice the body of the marquis to their resentment, whatever might be the result of his sentence.

The judge having now the desired witness, it did not require much skill or trouble to establish the guilt of the marquis.

He now appeared in court. The first object which his eyes met was the Count de Gras, at the sight of whom he turned as pale as death ; but conquering his violent emotions as much as possible, he begged the superior to proceed with the charges.

The marquis was now asked if he had anything to allege in favour of himself, and if he could adduce anything which would palliate his guilt ; he answered in the negative, and fully acknowledged the justness of the charges, together with a multiplicity of others, which crowded against him from all quarters.

But now to the case of the unfortunate Duclôs, whose charge being fully proved, he was ordered to die.

He submitted to his fate with manly fortitude, and his countenance, whilst the judge was passing sentence on him, did not change.

The marquis exulted in the most scornful revenge.

The judge was now going to pass the same sentence on the haughty and impious Marquis de St Puffet, whose mind was composed, and towered above the rest with the most dauntless and savage air.

He heard the judge with intrepid fortitude, who, awed by his fearless mien, paused a minute, during which appalling period he uttered a horrid imprecation against the family of Gras, and plunged a dagger (which he had concealed) into his breast.

The purple gore flowed in torrents from the deep gash ; all present uttered a cry of terror, all shrunk back shocked and amazed ; and whilst each spectator was indulging themselves by fixing their eyes on the deadly corpse, his expiring soul broke out into the following wild exclamation :—

“ Cursed be thyself and thy family, and may their progeny be hell-deemed for ever ! ”

The last words faltered on his lips, and while his eyes stared with a wild and vacant look of horror, a deep and hollow groan marked the final exit of his soul.

His lifeless corpse was stretched along the passage, and upon his soul-illuminated countenance played a smile of the most scornful revenge.

His livid complexion, sunken eyes, and distorted features, were rendered still more terrible by the empty stare of horror which pervaded his features.

Everybody seemed riveted to the spot, and all gazed on the inane body in speechless affright.

The count, Henry, and De Gernier were equally amazed ; indeed, terror had suspended the power of expression, and plunged their senses into unspeakable fear.

Even the stern judge turned away from the scene with emotions that were foreign to his mind.

Ordering the body to be removed, the people with slow and solemn pace quitted the tragic scene, but not before a general petition was made to mitigate the hard punishment of Duclôs.

The judge considered his case impartially, and acquiesced at length with the general popular feelings, and his sentence was mitigated into perpetual exile.

Peer Duclôs received this token of popular favour with most heartfelt gratitude, and also

viewed the body of the man whom he had robbed with the most appalling fear; as did also De Gernier, who was the only one of the party who had courage to go near the body of the marquis.

He contemplated the infuriate look of revenge and the wild expression of hopeless despair that marked his features. He saw a manuscript half out of his pocket, and he took it up, thinking that it might be further papers belonging to the Count de Gras.

The body of the wretched suicide being now reprieved, the hall was cleared of spectators, as the mob followed the body of the marquis, still riveting their eyes on the bier on which it was stretched.

The trio proceeded to their rooms, and having refreshed themselves, they went to the cell of Duclôs, where they found him preparing for his exile.

He was very glad when he saw his friends coming to him, who with tears in their eyes walked to him to wish him the last farewell.

Henry raised him, and when he recovered his senses he thanked the party for this last token of their generous sincerity.

"I shall," said the greatful man, "carry your respective memories with me to my solitary exile; and as it has pleased the Sovereign Arbitr of all human events to spare my life, may the remainder of it be passed in prayers and penitence!"

"The Lord has been merciful, ah! more merciful than I could have reasonably supposed, and I now see the force of contrite repentance.

"I have escaped the terrors of the law, but have plunged the soul of the Marquis de St Puffet into eternal misery; for no good can be ultimately expected from the commission of suicide. But I believe I have no fresh charge to tax myself with, as by exposing his baseness I did my duty, and favoured my contrition. And, poor fellow, as he was the hapless victim of sed apostacy, I have therefore to weep that his mind was so benighted, and that he loved darkness better than light.

"But my time is short, and I must briefly add, that to you, the Count de Gras, and your son, I beg you will both accept my most sincere thanks for your generous efforts in promoting my welfare; and to you, my dear friend De Gernier, the same sentiments for your fidelity to me to this last hour. I have injured you in my youth, ah! injured you beyond redress; I despised your advice, and followed my own miserable sophisms! but I have enjoyed its fatal fruits, and experience has awfully evinced how wretched, how unfortunate, how infatuated, and how criminal has been my life! but I know, I have your pardon for all my weakness, and in solitude, ah! in the silent shade of solitude, where no envious thoughts will distract my brain, and no worldly affairs divert my attention from the concerns of eternity, I shall often think of you, and bless you amongst the many for whose frailties and imperfections I shall weep."

De Gernier was sorry that his departure was so near, and told him, that in his absence he should often think of him, and shed a tear of affection, as memory would recal the subject of his sincerity.

The count and Henry also assured him that they would equally entertain the same principles.

He now walked with his friends to take his departure, as the vessel would, ere a few days were elapsed, be ready to convey him to the place of his destination.

He with tears, and shaking the hands of his friends, stepped into the carriage which was to carry him to the rendezvous, from whence a vessel would waft him to the shores of his future destination.

A variety of ideas associated themselves with the subject of his former pleasures, and, in the contemplation of the past scenes of his miserable existence, a pleasing and soft melancholy shaded the tumult of those ideas which raged in his breast.

Thus much for the unfortunate Duclôs, who from his nature discovered a sincere and open heart. His mind in his early days was susceptible of the most amiable impression; but the gay scenes of the world allured him from the paths of virtue, perverted his talents, and hardened his feelings. When he did a bad action he was sorry for it, and had his mind been previously estranged from the powerful charms of dissipation, he would not have courted scenes of pleasure, which, placed as he was in a military station, he could not resist.

His situation in life offered many incentives to liberty, which stimulated him to reject the

sober principles of virtue, and follow the headstrong and uncontrolled maxims of vice. Gaming was the dawn of his misery, and so will it be ever productive of sorrow and misery to all those who allow the evil propensity to gain an ascendancy in their minds.

The amiable, worthy, and virtuous trio were much affected by his departure; they pitied the strength of his worldly passions, and their ultimate sad effect. They commended his pious contrition, which afforded them all the most heartfelt pleasure.

CHAPTER IX.

“Art thou anything?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That thou mak’st my blood cold, and my hair to stand!
Speak to me, what art thou?”—SHAKSPEARE.

The idea of the horrid suicide still hung quivering on everybody’s lips, and occupied most manfully their feelings.

It afforded all the spectators the strongest example of the tortured conscience of a wicked man in the last stage of his iniquity.

As far as earthly commiseration availeth, they pitied the wretched man for the ends which he used to gratify his fallen ambition, and also for the dreary prospects which he would have of eternity.

De Gernier opening the manuscript of the marquis, began to read it, and was astonished beyond measure in finding the name of Agnes frequently inserted in it, and also with the strange conclusion.

There was something in the lines too mysterious to escape his attention, he therefore read it over again, having done which, he gave it to the count for his perusal with emotions of the greatest surprise.

“*The Memorial of the wretched and disappointed Marquis de St Puffet.*

“From the most gloomy apartment of human misery I now take up my pen, to narrate in these my last sad reflections. My life has been guilty, and I have injured many, and I greatly fear that the hand of justice is going to punish my crimes. Yet why need I fear? Should dissolution be my portion in this world, I shall be happy, for it will free my soul from the bonds of servitude, and I shall rise above the errors of a vain superstition, which is calculated only to sour the bliss of this life, and pave the way to sorrow and misery. Ah! my dear Agnes! let not the manes of thy wretched remains visit me in this period of affliction! I know I have injured you far beyond the power of redress, but it was my impassioned love which instigated me to bribe the gardener of the convent of St Claire to infuse the soporific draught in the glass of cold water which he administered to you. Ah! it had the fatal effect, you remained in a state of insensibility for forty-eight hours, during which period you was conveyed far from the reach of the lady abbess, and lodged in the chateau of the injured Count de Gras. But ah! Agnes, not long have I enjoyed the roses of love, and not long have I revelled in your heavenly society, for death, stern death! indifferent in his choice, and who snatches with impartial hand the high and the low, the rich and the poor, has robbed me of my celestial treasure. What now remains for me but a guilty conscience, and a frowning heaven! Conscience did I say? Oh! bugbear of imagination! Not all the boasted terrors of eternity can soften my obdurate heart, or alter in the least the code of my atheistical principles. Ah! lady abbess, you little think that it was I! it was I, the wretched Marquis de St Puffet, that seduced your girl, and stole her from the convent! Ah! it was I that sent her loaded with misery to the grave! But why do I fear? nothing but an eternal sleep, and a pleasing oblivion of all the sorrows and cares of this life, can follow my dissolution. Ah! happy time! To all mankind I now confess, that I was the robber of the family mansion of the Count de Gras, the seducer and the murderer of Agnes—”

The poor count wept over the contents of this epistle, and he resolved to show it to the judge, as a clear confession of the Marquis de St Puffet’s guilt written in his own hand.

Whilst these things were passing on, De Gernier communicated his intention to the Count de Gras of visiting the convent of St Claire, in order to acquaint the lady abbess with the whole of the intelligence concerning Agnes, and also to gain some further particulars concern-

ing the subject of his surprise. As the conclusion of the marquis's memorial was written very illegibly, it carried with it the strongest conviction to the mind of De Gernier, that the terrors of his soul became legible in his writing; and in writing the last word, his feelings were probably so overpowered by the sense of his guilt, as not to enable him the faculty of concluding the word Agnes.

Henry, on reading the papers, betrayed the same emotions as his father did, and was very glad to find so ample a confession of the marquis's guilt; but as far as it related to Agnes, her name being foreign to his mind, it was quite a mystery to him.

The soul of Henry, which was once infuriate and vindictive in the extreme against the marquis, was now more composed and tranquil; he contemplated the iniquitous scenes of his life with an awful fear, and he now entertained more the sentiments of commiseration than of anger; and he thought that so much baseness could have hardly entered the heart of a man to conceive, much more to perpetrate. He wept for his crimes, and shuddered at the sad eternity which awaited his unhappy soul.

For when the day of retribution arrives, all those who have committed evil will be impartially judged: the good which has been done will be rewarded, and the evil punished.

It was now mutually agreed that the count and Henry should proceed to the chateau, whilst De Gernier should discover the convent of St Claire, and find out some light concerning the mysterious Agnes.

The count and Henry proceeded to the family mansion, and they set out in the evening proposing to go as far as the chateau of the Countess de Sants, who, being very ill, could not be acquainted with the strange proceedings at Paris.

It was a beautiful and clear evening, the ruling king of day was bending his course towards the west, and a little before they reached the gates of the chateau belonging to the Countess de Sants, it lost itself behind the huge forest, which clothed the mountains from the base nearly to the summits. The tops of the trees were shaded with a saffron glow; nothing was heard but the sweet harmony of the birds, and all was solemnly still—

"Save where the beetle wheeld his drony flight,
And drowns tinklings full'd the distant folds."

The countess was glad to see them, but was in too delicate a state to have anything communicated to her: indeed her spirits would not allow her to see Henry.

The count informed his amiable sister that his journey being dictated by the hurry of business, he was forced to leave her the next morning, promising at the same time to renew his visit the earliest opportunity.

Indeed, owing to the severe indisposition of the countess, it was very properly adjusted, as she was by far too ill to see him long, or to entertain him in a suitable manner.

The count and Henry pursued their journey the ensuing morning with much lighter hearts than they were wont to experience.

The wishes of the count were now amply completed, yet still others hung upon his mind, as he wished to know if Monsieur L'Oiseau was living, and if he was, where he resided. Every time his imagination flew to his memory, a shade of melancholy clouded his spirits, and plunged them into a Laethian torpor. Besides, he was anxious to be acquainted with the conclusion of De Gernier's history, some parts of which he nevertheless anticipated, and also some knowledge concerning Agnes.

The miserable Leonora, when she found that her father had left her, was very solitary, and little expected that he was now so near the family mansion.

She did not grieve much for his departure, but was upon the whole rejoiced with the objects that dictated it, as the worthy count had left a note in which he explained everything relative to his haste, and also the minutest circumstance which would tend to mitigate her surprise and fear. She often thought of De Gernier, and was rejoiced with the pleasing anticipation of soon seeing him.

But she was not suffered to remain long in silent expectation, for perceiving a carriage driving up the venerable avenue of trees, she made no doubt that it contained the long-expected trio.

At first she thought it was the Marquis de St Puffet, but she had not long to disturb her-

self by this grating reflection, for in a few minutes the carriage drove up to the door, the count sallied forth, and perceiving his daughter, she rushed to meet his and her brother's embrace.

"Oh! how painful has been my suspense, and how happy am I now to see you! Ah! how lonely has been my solitude since your absence! I have been in hourly expectation that the guilty Marquis de St Puffet would drive me away from the chateau."

"Ah! do not persecute his sad memory," said the count; "he has left this world in the most miserable manner, for the most shocking suicide has marked his dissolution."

"What!" quickly interrupted Leonora, "is the Marquis de St Puffet dead! How astonished am I!—what! poniarded himself!—ah, wretched man, how strong is the force of the conviction of guilt!"

"Indeed it is," rejoined her father, "but, however, now, my dear Leonora, let peace forever crown this mansion, for every mystery is finally explained, and I have recovered the title-deeds."

The count now proceeded to inform Leonora of the whole of the proceedings, the faithful exertions of De Gernier, and the singular and fortunate meeting of Henry, who had been forced to Paris to prosecute the marquis.

"Oh! my dear father, is all then at length settled? I may now then enjoy the society of my dear De Gernier unmolested. No corroding care will distract his attention, and I hope he will enjoy that peaceful, quiet and serene happiness which his toils and honourable exertions so amply entitle him to expect."

Her joy on seeing her brother was indefinite, and he explained every family mystery to her with the most affectionate solicitude.

She eagerly asked her father the reasons why De Gernier did not accompany them; to which he replied, that he was making a long journey, and explained the whole of the circumstances respecting the mysterious fate of Agnes, whose name was inserted in the wretched memorial of the Marquis de St Puffet.

Henry now departed to visit the cottage, as he wished much to revisit its rural simplicity.

When he reached the humble mansion, he was surprised to find it look so beautiful and romantic.

The first thing which he did after he had examined the grounds was to pay a visit to the worthy Monsieur St Merville, who received him most cordially.

He proceeded to detail with fond prolixity the adventures of the family, the death of the marquis, the perpetual banishment of the unfortunate Monsieur Duclôs, and of the final re-possession of the family mansion and all the title-deeds. He also dwelt with energy on the subject of De Gernier, and his virtues. He informed the worthy man that he would soon be at the family mansion, after all matters were finally adjusted.

The worthy prelate was surprised and delighted with the account, and promised, at the express wish of Henry, to visit the chateau.

Monsieur St Merville informed Henry that he was partly acquainted with the circumstance of the count's sudden departure, and the vulgar populace had spread a rumour, which he was happy to find successfully confirmed in all its stages.

Henry having now regaled his fancy, he returned to his father and Leonora, being much delighted with the situation of the humble cottage, which from its retirement lulled the mind into a soft and pleasing melancholy, and from its rustic simplicity promoted the most lively relish for the beauties of nature.

The cottage and the grounds around appeared quite new to him, as the little time which he remained there did not impress any particular sensation of pleasure on his mind.

It was fixed by the count, and also at the express wish of Henry, that the cottage should be fitted up for him, as he was so delighted with the romantic and picturesque scenery of the country.

He was pleased with the pastoral landscape of the country, and the honest simplicity of the inhabitants. No guile marked their countenances; and they were fair, open, and candid in all their dealing, and they all spoke the language of nature, uncontaminated by art.

He was much pleased with the society of Monsieur St Merville, and as he resided in the village it was a double inducement for Henry to take up his quarters in the cottage.

The Count de Gras was in anxious expectation of a visit from Monsieur, Madame, and Clara

Barné, the individuals who took the cottage of Monsieur L'Oiseau, which was situated in the south of France.

They had long promised them a visit, and they now fixed the present period to put into execution their intended plans.

Having heard of the trial of the Marquis de St Puffet, and seeing Monsieur de Gernier's name inserted amongst the witnesses, it strongly induced them to come to Paris, which being put into execution, they made themselves known to De Gernier, who introduced them to the Count de Gras, and likewise to his son.

Henry was much pleased with the unaffected modesty, good sense, and artless simplicity of Clara, who had no mean claim to beauty, and certainly an ample portion of good sensibility.

Monsieur Barné, her father, was a man of some property, and of a most amiable disposition. He retired amongst the wilds of solitude, with a heart full of the precious meed of pity for the frailties of man: he liked to wander with Clara amongst the wild mountains, and point out to her the beauties of nature.

The situation of the chateau of the Count de Gras would please them vastly, and more particularly Clara Barné.

During its unlawful occupation by the Marquis de St Puffet it frowned with anger on his dark works, and smiled with pity on the helpless state of the unfortunate Agnes.

Many mysteries increased the solemn majesty of the chateau, and tended to awe the gazing spectator.

Clara would make a charming companion for Leonora, and the quiet, serene, and interesting manner of her father was most congenial with the spirits of the worthy Count de Gras, who was now tottering under the infirmities of age.

His past afflictions had greatly harassed his mind and debilitated his nerves, and it seemed that it was a hard combat between nature and art, whether he would survive to witness the ample completion of his wishes; which, though but now small, were great when compared with his infirm station.

He wished much for the return of De Gernier, to be acquainted with the particulars concerning Agnes, and also to crown his union with Leonora, which would make his grey hairs descend with peace to the grave.

Leaving the count and family in anxious expectation of Monsieur, Madame, and Clara Barné, let us attend De Gernier on his eventful journey.

Before he left Paris he made all possible inquiry concerning the situation of the convent of St Claire, and he gained the most satisfactory intelligence.

He was informed that it was situated in an immense forest in the south of France.

He dreaded the idea of travelling through its trackless paths, as, should he be unfortunately benighted, in vain could he seek for assistance.

But the causes which instigated him to brave the dangers of his journey made him dauntless, and he determined to pursue his way despite of all perils.

He was fortunate enough to be informed of the exact situation of the forest, but it occasioned him some anxiety to discover the position of the convent.

He pursued his way through the most beautiful and luxuriant country; plantations of vine, palm and olive, were exquisitely contrasted with dark woods of pine, cypress, larch, and chesnut. The road wound round the feet of the mountains, whose summits were fringed with ash and willow.

The road followed its serpentine direction, till at length it brought the adventurous hero into a most beautiful plain.

The vines were covered with luxurious festoons of purple grapes, the rich orange trees poured forth their odoriferous scent to the desert air, whilst the chaste olives concealed themselves behind their foliage.

He advanced, and having crossed the plain, found himself in another valley.

The lonely grandeur of the grey mountains on each side of him raised in his mind the most awful ideas; he travelled over hill and dale for two successive days, till he at length arrived at the forest in which the convent of St Claire was embowered.

He was forced to travel slowly, as his horse's strength was nearly exhausted, owing to the heat of the weather, and the hot burning sands.

The romantic wildness and waving blackness of the forest, which contrasted with its solitary and aged aspect, raised in his mind the most awful and terrifying ideas.

He gazed on the gloomy woods with serious attention, and the idea that he was so near (at least from anticipation) the convent of St Claire, elated, but greatly agitated, his spirits.

The sun was now on the verge of setting; a fiery gleam, which shot itself all over the west, was the prelude of its dissolution; and whilst De Gernier was contemplating the mild grandeur of the scene, the resplendent orb stole from his view, and lost itself behind the forest.

Its glorious splendour shaded the boundless horizon with a yellow gleam, and lighted up a few partial recesses of the gloomy forest, whilst the rest was shrouded in solemn obscurity.

As he gazed on the sublime scene, he heard the sound of distant music, which floated on the western gale; it enchanted his senses, and riveted him to the spot. The sound seemed to die away—now rose into a louder swell, and then sunk down into the softest cadence. He was almost induced to think that it was the magic effect of enchantment; but the almost allowable delusion soon passed away, for the music was distinctly heard which issued from the convent of St Claire. The nuns were chanting the requiem and their evening devotions.

He proceeded a little further, and as he advanced the bell rang for vespers.

He was now confirmed in the pleasing idea that he was not far from the convent.

The shades of night now began to thicken, and grey twilight soon veiled in obscurity the wide extended landscape of nature.

His spirits began to fail, but were soon revived at the view of a distant light, which glimmered in the obscurity of the forest.

He advanced, and having reached the spot from whence it issued, he stopped to look if it was the convent, or, at all events, to awaken the inhabitants to direct him the way to it.

He heard nothing but the dismal howlings of the wild beasts of prey, and being forced by necessity, he broke forth into the following abrupt exclamation:—

“ Oh! Father of mercies, have pity on thy wretched creature man, and grant him an asylum in this hour of trouble! Oh inhabitant of this forest, may I beseech you to grant me a night’s repose? Ah, wretched lady abbess, you little think that the man is now so near you, who is seeking to inform you of the fate of the wretched Agnes.”

De Gernier stopped, and thought that he heard a human voice; nor was he deceived, for presently he saw a door open on the side of the hill.

It was the cave of a hermit, and presently a man of tall stature, and from whose pallid face was suspended a long white beard, made his appearance.

His form was slender, and his mien majestic, and a religious solemnity clouded his brow, whilst the most calm and quiet manner marked his address.

His godlike appearance awed De Gernier, who stood aghast, and gazed on the supernatural being in speechless affright.

He at last found words to express himself, and thus addressed the reverend sire:—

“ Oh, being, whether mortal or not, have pity on a poor deserted knight, who has lost his way in this dark and gloomy forest; commiserate his case, and grant him a night’s lodging.”

The hermit contemplated the manly countenance of De Gernier, in which were expressed all the hopes and fears of an heroic mind, and with a calm sympathy he thus addressed him:—

“ What bringeth thee here, friend, at this time of night, in this dark forest, in whose wilds so many have perished? How is it that you have not paid dear for your temerity? But, not to distress your feelings, come in and partake of my humble fare.”

De Gernier obeyed the venerable man’s request, thanking him most sincerely for his liberality.

He put before him some dried fruit, herbs, milk, and figs, of which De Gernier made a most luscious repast, for many hours had elapsed since he had tasted anything.

Whilst De Gernier was eating his meal, the hermit eyed him attentively, and seemed, watching his features with the most anxious solicitude. He was much struck with his manly countenance and dignified manner.

Whilst the venerable man was indulging his curiosity, our hero turned from his table, to make the most sincere thanks to his venerable host.

De Gernier gazed on his solemn aspect, and he seemed more than mortal.

His manner was quiet and impressive, his voice hollow and solemn, and his mien majestic

and commanding. His beard was tinged with a silvery hue, and his dignified appearance was increased by the peculiar manner of his dress; a fixed serenity was settled on his brow, and his maturer years, without impairing the comeliness of his countenance had added a dignity to his features, which his earlier days had left unfinished.

In short, every circumstance plainly discovered to De Gernier, that he had long bid adieu to the gay scenes of the world, to plunge himself into the wilds of solitude and reflection.

De Gernier having finished his repast, the hermit requested him to acquaint him with the reasons which induced him to visit the forest.

He replied, that the unfortunate end of Agnes, a nun of the convent of St. Claire, and who was seduced by the Marquis de St. Puffet, induced him to find out the mother abbess, to communicate to her the intelligence of her death. He acquainted the hermit with the peculiar circumstances which attended her death, and also informed him that they seemed so mysterious, that he was resolved to discover the lady abbess of the convent of St. Claire, in order to gain some intelligence on the strange subject.

Here the feelings of the hermit, which were gradually sinking into despondency from the account of De Gernier, now totally overcame him, and uttering a hollow groan he fainted away.

Our hero was amazed, and gazed on the seeming lifeless body of the hermit with the utmost terror and astonishment; but the venerable man soon revived, and his spirits being too weak to hear further intelligence of De Gernier, he communicated his intention of having another interview with him on the ensuing morning.

The venerable man took De Gernier by the arm, and conducted him to a small apartment, which he had prepared for him.

When our hero reached his room, a variety of strong emotions struggled in his breast, at once to frighten his perturbed imagination.

The reasons why the hermit discovered such strong emotions at the bitter fate of Agnes, and why he scrutinized him with such attention, plunged his soul into the most mysterious reflection, and the more he endeavoured to ease his mind, the more he was at a loss to give any reasons which would effect it.

A variety of ideas suggested themselves, till at length his spirits, wearied with fatigue, sunk into Morpheus's arms.

When the worthy man's senses were restored to him, he exclaimed:—"Ah, ill-fated Agnes! ah, my child! at length is the sad intelligence granted me which I have long anticipated, and which I am afraid is but now too truly confirmed. Oh thou vile monster, that hast robbed me of my child, may thou feel all the pangs and stings which I now experience! but no more to heap curses on thy wretched memory, however just they may be. Thy soul has received its desert, and you have suffered for your baseness and iniquity. Ah! good lady abbess, I can now ease your mind of a material portion of its sorrow, by informing you of that which you must have long anticipated."

CHAPTER X.

A mystery and an explanation.

THE venerable hermit now retired to rest, and endeavoured to seek relief in the arms of sleep; but he laid his weary body on a sleepless couch, for the most terrible dreams haunted his imagination.

He awoke early the next morning, and went to De Gernier's room, who was nearly habited. The picture of his mother, which his father had given him previous to his first departure from the cottage, was lying on the table.

The hermit seemed riveted to the spot, his colour faded from his countenance, and gazing on the miniature with the most ineffable surprise and agonizing suspense, he exclaimed, "My wife! my long-lost wife!" and, staggering, fell senseless to the ground.

De Gernier was thunderstruck; he advanced, and lifting up his eyes, he fixed them on his countenance, and loudly vociferated, "My father! my long-lost father!" and fell senseless by his side.

When he recovered from his surprise and heartfelt astonishment, he examined the features

of his father more attentively, and clearly perceived the ravages which affliction, time, and solitude had effected.

When he left his father, he was in the pride and glory of manhood, but vicissitudes and calamities now made him totter under the infirmities of forced old age.

His sunken eyes, pallid face, long silvery beard, and emaciated form, had so disguised him, that his son could not at first recognize him; and it is now evident why the hermit discovered such strong emotions when his son was eating his meal.

Pierre lifted the weak and tottering frame of his father from the ground, and applying restoratives, he soon recovered his senses.

"Oh! merciful Father!" said the venerable man, "can I believe what I now witness? Is it true that you are my son?" Advance, child, and let me examine your features. Ah! indeed it is! his mother's eyes sparkle in his countenance, and her delicate sensibility clouds his brow. My long lost, dearly beloved son, who comes to seek his father, despite of all perils, and to inform him of the death of his daughter, receive my benediction, and know that Agnes was your sister!"

"My sister, sir!" exclaimed Pierre with amazement; "and had I then a sister, and sacrificed to the lawless passion of the monster, who, not content with one bad action, must needs pour a deluge of woe upon the family? Oh! period of exquisite bliss—of misery ineffable! and had I, sir, a sister?"

"You had indeed, my boy, and I placed her in the convent of St. Claire, which is contiguous to this spot; for what cause I will soon give my reasons."

Pierre, the more he talked with his father, was the more amazed, and he examined his features, which strongly exposed the feelings of his mind.

"Since then," said Monsieur L'Oiseau, "it has pleased the Almighty God to restore to me my long lost child, I will now die in peace."

"Ah! sir," replied his son, "do not fill your mind with such ideas; you have yet much to be acquainted with, much to do, and, I trust, eventual comfort and satisfaction to experience. I am anxious to be acquainted with the reasons which induced you to follow this dreary life, and also to be informed of some further particulars respecting my sister Agnes."

"Sit down, my dear boy," said the hermit, "and I will communicate to you all the particulars, and ease your mind of a material portion of its anguish and suspense."

Monsieur, in a slow and solemn tone of voice, delivered the following narrative to his son:

The Narrative of Monsieur L'Oiseau, the Hermit of the Forest of St. B——

"To retrace the scenes of my former days would be a most tedious, and at the same time a most melancholy task; suffice it to say, that, as far as regards your sister, as soon as she was weaned she was placed under the protection of the lady abbess, from the circumstance of the very strong resemblance which she bore to her mother; who was as beautiful as Madonna, and was adorned with the sensibility of Magdalén.

"I was afraid that, had I kept my daughter, the very faithful image which she bore to her mother might ultimately disclose the secret of our dwelling, and be the means of bringing on a multitude of evils, which at that time I was anxious to avoid by living in honourable obscurity and humble retirement; besides, my own private reasons induced me strongly to place her in a convent; and, being supported by collateral reasons, I put into execution my intended plan. For I was anxious that the Count de Gras should not discover our retreat, as having lost the title-deeds of the family mansion (concerning which subject I gave you some hints previous to your departure from the cottage) while crossing over a heath, I was afraid that, should the count find out my humble dwelling, and were he to ask me for the deeds, the reply which I should necessarily be forced to give him, would instigate him to suspect that I was endeavouring to shade my weakness with duplicity. Besides, I further thought, that by placing my child in a convent, she would avoid the contagion of a dissipated world, and find ample pleasure from the society and conversation of the lady abbess, as I did not subject her to the order of the convent, its severity and penance. Thus much for my unfortunate child (a tear glistened in his eye as these words escaped from his lips); I now proceed to acquaint you with a fresh calamity, and as you have seen Monsieur Barnes, I make no doubt that he has made known to you the dread intelligence. I allude to the death of my dearly lamented wife, which melancholy event took place soon after your first departure from the cottage, who hearing that

you were killed in battle, it brought on a severe indisposition, which probably accelerated her dissolution. My affliction and distress you may easily conceive was unbounded; and finding that I could not live at the cottage, as each object in cruel succession was continually stirring up in my mind the past endearments of life, I quitted it, and determined to seek comfort in solitude and repose. I therefore delivered up my humble mansion, and paid a visit to the lady abbess, and communicated to her the whole of my distress, but could not find courage to see my child. I therefore ordered the good mother not to acquaint her with my increased calamity, or indeed to acquaint her with anything about that father, who if present she could not know, as the early age at which she was placed at the convent would not allow her to distinguish the features of her parent.

"The lady abbess was affected by my tender recital, and sympathized most feelingly with me for the multiplied affliction which I had sustained. She pointed out to me my present case, since I was resolved to follow a secluded life. I left her in agony, telling her that I should never see her again, probably, in this life; and told her to cherish the principles of my daughter, and prepare her for eternity.

"I have now, my dear son, informed you of some of the leading particulars of my life; the others you know, or at least can save me the trouble of relating them by anticipating their misery.

"You have given me some superficial intelligence concerning your strange adventures, and having concluded my melancholy narrative, I must now beg of you to give me yours, and satisfy my anxiety."

"Thank you, my dear father; I shall now give you some particulars, which will both astonish and satisfy you."

De Gernier now proceeded to acquaint him with all the circumstances which occurred to him since he left the cottage, and with the utmost solicitude begged him to listen to his short narrative.

"After I quitted the cottage, I addressed many epistles both to you and my mother, and not having any reply, I concluded that some accident had happened to the family, and that you had quitted the south of France, and consequently had never received my letters. I was afflicted beyond measure, and the idea operated so strongly on my mind that it induced me to quit the service. I went to the cottage, and to my inexpressible anguish found that you had long quitted it. Monsieur Barné also informed me of my mother's death, and hinted that the state of your health was such when you left the cottage that, added to calamity, he made no doubt your dissolution was completed. I sought for you in vain. Time reconciled me to my hard fate, and I re-entered the service, and gained a commission in a regiment of which the Marquis de St Puffet was the colonel, and he expelled me for my interference concerning some papers (amongst which were others of a military nature), which I perfectly remember to have been your hand-writing."

Monsieur L'Oiseau now expressed in his countenance the strongest degree of surprise.

"This marquis was the very man who found the title-deeds which you lost, and basely claimed the family mansion of the Count de Gras, drove him to seek shelter in the storm of an unfriendly world, without once considering the nature of the guilt he was forming, or the misery he was entailing on all around."

Here De Gernier concluded his narrative by informing his father of his interview with the Count de Gras, his affection for Leonora, the whole account of the unfortunate Duclos, the prosecution of the marquis, his sad end, and the final restoration of the property. He also acquainted him with the particular situation in which he was placed with Leonora, and delivered up the memorial of the Marquis de St Puffet, by means of throwing light on the miserable subject of Agnes's death.

Monsieur L'Oiseau shed tears of gladness at the mention of ultimate happiness.

"This Marquis de St Puffet," said our hero, "is the robber of the family mansion of the Count de Gras, and the seducer and murderer of my sister Agnes. But no more to insult his wretched memory, for, poor mortal, he has passed through the ordeal of his baseness, and the most untimely dissolution has been the reward of his dark works."

It was now mutually settled that the hermit should renounce his solitary life and attend at the marriage of his son;

He wished much to see the Count de Gras, and atone for all his juvenile indiscretion. Years might perhaps, thought the worthy man, mitigate the severity of his judgment, and the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed would perhaps restore him to the favour of the count, and reconcile past ill-judged animosity on both sides.

Poor Monsieur L'Oiseau was astonished at the tender recital of his son, but was rejoiced at the general good which it produced in the family of the Count de Gras.

He determined, previous to his departure from the forest, to pay a visit to the lady abbess of the convent of St Claire, in order to acquaint her with the sudden change and his unexpected bliss in meeting his son, whom he had long consigned to eternity.

They now proposed to take their walk, and one of the most charming and mild evenings of autumn favoured their plans. The rich season had marked the foliage of the trees with her sweetest tints.

They walked through the most beautiful and romantic country; wide-stretching oak and unbrageous beeches warded off the heat of the sun, which had now long passed the boundary of its meridian glory, and was bending its solemn and stately march towards the west.

Long before the forest tops were tinged with a golden hue, the unfriendly tribute of its dissolution, the father and son reached the gates of the convent of St Claire, the gothic aspect of which greatly pleased Pierre.

They rang the great bell, which awful summons being answered, they inquired for the lady abbess, and being ushered into her apartment, the venerable hermit explained the motives of his visit.

She was much surprised to see him, and was greatly affected by his tender recital, but her mind being perfectly resigned, she heard the whole of the worthy Monsieur L'Oiseau's sad tale with commendable fortitude, and all she could do was to shed tears over the memory of the unfortunate Agnes L'Oiseau.

The worthy hermit told the lady abbess not to dwell on the melancholy subject any more, as she could not possibly tax herself with any blame, and he concluded by saying that this would probably be his last visit; and having acquainted her that he should still correspond with her, he with tears in his eyes tore himself from her embrace, and waving a white pocket handkerchief as a signal of adieu, was soon out of sight.

The lady abbess was nearly overpowered by her feelings when Monsieur L'Oiseau wished her adieu, and was much affected with the interesting appearance of De Gernier, whom he introduced to her as his son, and dwelt with affectionate energy on the strange circumstances which instigated their singular meeting.

The lady abbess told Monsieur L'Oiseau that she should always bear in mind his memory, which would exist in her breast till the last moment of her life.

The lady abbess was not much astonished at the recital of Monsieur L'Oiseau upon the whole, as the gardener, having confessed the whole of his baseness, informed her that the Marquis de St Puffet commissioned him to infuse a soporific draught in a glass of water, and to administer it to her. He added, that the fatal poison had its immediate effect, that she was suddenly seized with violent emotions, and falling into insensibility, she was immediately removed by the Marquis de St Puffet to his chateau.

The worthy and tender-hearted mother shed tears of pity for the baseness of the marquis, and was astonished at the enormity of his duplicity and the extent of his iniquity; but finding it useless to mourn, she gave her child up as lost, and communicated the sad intelligence to the hermit, who was of course afflicted beyond measure at the pathetic account.

The lady abbess, giving up Agnes as lost to her in this variable world of sorrow and vanity, erected a neat monument to her unfortunate memory, and ordered the requiem to be chanted on certain evenings in the year; and the music which Pierre L'Oiseau heard when he gained the forest, previous to his interview with his father, proceeded from the convent of St Claire, for the nuns were paying the tribute sacred to the memory of his departed sister.

Pierre but little thought, when he was listening to the pealing anthem, that it was chanted to waft the soul of his dear sister to the blissful shores of eternity.

The poor mother by degrees was reconciled to the stern decree, and instead of rebuking the Marquis de St Puffet's baseness, she pitied his frailty, and was much affected when the

hermit informed her that he died in a manner which exposed the fierce passions of his nature, and wrusted for ever from him the slightest hold of eternity.

In short, the meeting with Monsieur l'Oiseau reconciled her feelings, and she told him that she should now die in peace, as having seen the father of the child who was stolen from her; and being informed of all the circumstances which aided the baseness of the marquis, she reposed the anguish of her breast in the bosom of the hermit, and wished him adieu with tears, but with satisfaction.

CHAPTER XI.

“Thrice happy meeting!
Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.”—BLAISE.

Just as they quitted the court which led to the great gates, the bell with slow and solemn sound chimed for vespers.

The hermit, musing on the fortitude of the lady abbess, exclaimed, “Oh blessed woman! thou art born to resist the calamities of life, and bear with fortitude its sorrowful vicissitudes.”

Presently they heard the softest, the most melancholy music.

It was the music of the convent chanting the requiem for the soul of the departed Agnes.

This instance of the lady abbess's respect to the memory of the hermit's daughter touched his soul to the quick, but it was inconsistent for him to betray his emotions, since the good mother abbess had shown an example of piety and resignation.

He listened with rapture to the music, till at length it died away—again a louder swell floated on the passing gale, and again sunk into air.

The bright orb of day began to decline, and its fading rays marked the boundless horizon with a roseate hue, in which was mixed a saffron shade, and its last gleam heightened the richness of autumn's vivid tints.

They walked on, till at length they came to a little amphitheatre in the wood.

Pierre ascended the summit, and contemplated the sublimity of the scene, which immediately surrounded him with a reverential awe. His ideas were filled with the utmost wonder and astonishment as he gazed on the blue ether, in whose unfathomable depths countless myriads of worlds lay scattered and concealed from mortals' curious and penetrating eyes.

The chaste orb of night was just ascending above the horizon. A universal calm involved the face of things: they listened to catch the passing sounds, but all was hushed into solemn stillness. Short-lived was the triumph, for presently they heard the trampling of horses.

They gazed anxiously on all around, and presently they saw two knights on horseback.

The first was of a towering form and commanding countenance, whilst the second was a venerable, valiant-looking knight, who appeared as if he had braved all the perils of the holy wars.

They both riveted their eyes on them, and found, to their inexpressible astonishment, that the strangers were the Count de Gras and his son.

The count gazed on De Gernier in speechless amazement, as did Henry on the venerable hermit; till the count, regaining those emotions which the most ineffable surprise had conquered, advanced towards Pierre, and said, “By what mystery is it that I find you in this remote forest, accompanied with yonder holy and venerable-looking man? Is he your guide through these pathless tracts? Who is he?”

“He is my father! my long-lost father!” replied Pierre with the most energetic warmth.

“Your father!” quickly interrupted the count; “oh strange mystery!”

He cast his eyes on the venerable form of the hermit, and but too truly recognized in him Monsieur l'Oiseau, the husband of his sister.

The hermit advanced before the count, and falling on his knees, said, “Forgive the penitent man, the folly of whose youthful indiscretion, and the raging flame of love, induced him to elope with your sister. My ardent affection blinded the principles of reason, and in my juvenile days I considered not the misery I was entailing on the family; but maturest years have chastened the violence of my actions, and afforded me the most sincere and contrite repentance. But, alas! she has left this miserable world, and I trust the language of forgiveness

will bless her memory. Behold, honoured sir, my garb which I have worn for these last eight winters, and in solitude have I prayed for her happiness, and for your forgiveness."

"Rise, prostrate virtuous man! rise and receive my eternal forgiveness! Oh! had I but known the extent of your virtue, you should not have been treated thus; but

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Tears, more expressive than words, spoke the language of his feelings: his gratitude was warmed by the benevolence of the Count de Gras, and was confirmed by virtue.

They now proceeded by mutual consent to the cave, which was not far off.

The moon-beams pointed out the way, and threw a silvery glance at the reposing beauty of the landscape.

As they walked on, the conversation turned on the strange meeting of the hermit and his son, and also his many adventures of sorrow since he eloped with the count's sister.

In short, the hermit explained all the mysteries of the title-deeds, acquainted him with the affecting account of Agnes, the manner in which he discovered that De Garnier was his son, and communicated to the astonished count every little circumstance which could possibly tend to alleviate his anxiety.

The count was much affected; indeed the whole was a touching and sympathetic scene.

The father and son meeting after so many years' absence, the mutual explanation, the discovery of the Count de Gras, who was induced to visit the forest, partly from the same reasons which instigated him, and also to inquire about his fate, the meeting of the whole in the forest, and the general explanation which took place on all sides, concluded a scene the most interesting and pathetic.

Each was busy in recounting his respective troubles, calamities, and afflictions, and each was anxious to testify to each other the pleasure which the joyful and unexpected meeting afforded.

But no more to dwell on the dismals: suffice it to say that everything was explained, and the minds of all remained in no further mystery.

We must now inform our readers that Pierre concluded his history; and in order to prove to the party, and particularly to his father, that he had not broken the inviolable request, he produced the testimony of the marriage between Monsieur l'Oiseau and the count's sister.

This instance of Pierre's unbending virtue, and inflexible integrity, produced in the minds of all the most unequivocal sentiments of wonder and praise.

He informed the Count de Gras that he had quitted the military service, which had occasioned him much sorrow and little reward.

During the time of his visit at the cottage, his leave of absence was prolonged, and during the prosecution of the Marquis de St Puffet, finding that his aid would be indispensable to the family, he quitted the army, and thus had an ample opportunity of completing his sanguine wishes.

When the party reached the cave, the hermit gave them the best refreshment his humble dwelling afforded.

The count having finished his repast, he informed Monsieur l'Oiseau of the delicate situation in which his son was placed with regard to Leonora, and the worthy hermit rejoiced in the anticipation of his son's unalloyed bliss.

Poor Leonora, on the departure of her father and brother, passed her time in the monotonous uniformity of anxiety and suspense; she longed for the arrival of De Garnier, and wished also much to be acquainted with the sad history of the unfortunate Agnes.

When she went to bed, and paced to and fro the spacious, silent, and lonely chamber, her juvenile imagination was chilled with superstitious ideas, and her emotions being such which at times bordered on musing melancholy, she desired her faithful servant to come and dispel her gloomy despondency.

The holy flame of love, if absent from its tender object, is sure to invent miseries, to feed the hunger of dun melancholy, and kill the agonizing monotony of time.

Thus did Leonora, for, while Pierre was away, she was continually thinking that some danger had befallen him, at once to torture her peace and deaden the gloom of her solitude.

Leaving the amiable Leonora to the melancholy of her situation, let us attend to our cavalcade, who were the next morning all mounted, and eager to pursue their way.

Long before the rays of the morning sun had gleamed upon the cave which faced the east they commenced the toil of their journey.

Each admired the romantic beauty of the forest, and even the hermit, who had long been immured within its wilds, discovered new beauties, which before were concealed from his eyes.

One of the finest, the mildest, and the most balmy mornings of September graced the face of nature and welcomed their journey.

They passed through some of the most delightful parts of the country, and the party travelled slowly on, as the hermit stopped to acquaint the lady abbess with his increased good fortune.

He found her forlorn and disconsolate, and

————— “ In all the storm of grief;”

mourning the untimely end of the unfortunate Agnes, and also pitying the sad and dreary prospects which the wretched author of her misery would have of eternity.

He comforted her, and told her not to indulge in excessive grief, which, however amiable and praiseworthy it might be, was, if carried to excess, only ultimately productive of increased sorrow, and of no relief.

She now recovered her spirits, and was rejoiced to hear the good news of the hermit.

Monsieur L’Oiseau having satisfied his curiosity, wished the lady abbess a tender adieu, and rejoined the party.

Henry and De Gernier were the precursors, and the count and Monsieur L’Oiseau followed. They were now just at the edge of the forest, and were going into the high road which led to Paris, when, to their inexpressible astonishment, a carriage stopped before them, and a gentleman beckoned to the party.

It was Monsieur Barné’s carriage, and he was on his way to fulfil his intended visit to the family mansion of the Count de Gras; Clara was with him, but his wife was too much indisposed to venture abroad.

The count testified considerable joy in seeing him, and Monsieur Barné was very agreeably surprised to see the cavalcade emerge from the forest. But what was his astonishment, when, in examining the spectators, he discovered Monsieur L’Oiseau in his presence. An explanation immediately took place, and the palpable mystery was elucidated.

Monsieur Barné was equally glad to see De Gernier, and testified the sincerest sentiments of gladness for the unexpected bliss of the united families.

Henry made his respects to Clara, who looked ever and anon the same.

The carriage and cavalcade proceeded in full triumph to the venerable mansion, and after two days’ journey they came in sight of its slender watch-tower and grey turrets.

Leonora saw the party coming up the avenue, and with virtuous affection she flew to the door, and had the satisfaction to see the carriage and cavalcade arrive. Her father having dismounted, she flew to his embrace, and he pressed her with the most affectionate solicitude to his bosom.

The same token of sensibility was marked to Henry and Pierre by Leonora.

She wished to know who the strangers were, and was informed that they were Monsieur L’Oiseau and Monsieur Barné and his family.

She was much affected with the tender recital which De Gernier gave concerning Agnes, and shed tears of sympathy when he said that the venerable man who made such an impression on her was his father.

A mutual explanation now took place, and Leonora was deeply affected with the whole of the account.

The same also was effected between Monsieur L’Oiseau and Monsieur Barné, and in the midst of this clearing up of palpable mysteries, the carriage of the Countess de Santé drove up the avenue.

She was perfectly recovered, and came to fulfil her duties to her brother.

She was welcomed by all the family with the sincerest tokens of affection, and after having been introduced to the strangers, she began to congratulate the count on his extraordinary good luck, as she informed him that she was acquainted with all his vicissitudes, but expressed her astonishment at the unexpected intelligence of the subject of the meeting of Monsieur L'Oiseau, his son, and the Count de Gras.

And after all was explained, she said—" Oh happy period ! at length the sum of mystery is completed, and all its darkness elucidated, which once seemed in power eternal, and in calamity unbounded."

She was much pleased with her interview with Monsieur L'Oiseau, and had a nice tête-à-tête with Monsieur Barné and Pierre L'Oiseau.

She told them that she was affected beyond measure at the horrid death of the Marquis de St Puffet, and added that she felt sincerely for the fate of poor Duclôz, and was glad to find that his stern decree was mitigated into perpetual exile.

Nor was Henry unconscious of the chaste mildness and virtuous simplicity of Clara Barné.

Her amiable qualities warmed his soul, and he felt emotions which were foreign to his breast.

The same feelings regulated the mind of Clara.

The passion was mutual, and suffice it to say, that each day by kindling the flame, added fresh fuel to it.

In short, Henry was so pleased with her, that the union was proposed, and accepted with gladness by all parties.

Monsieur St Merville just arrived in time to lead them to the altar of Hymen.

The long settled marriage between Pierre and Leonora was now fixed to take place on the same day.

Ere a week elapsed, the respective unions would be completed, to the no small joy of the surrounding party.

The seventeenth having now arrived, Henry led Clara to the altar.

It is needless to expatiate on their happiness, for if it ever existed unalloyed, it certainly did with them.

It was mutually fixed that Henry and Clara should live in the cottage ; and that the family mansion should be entailed on Pierre, as a reward for all his faithful and meritorious exploits.

Monsieur L'Oiseau was to live with the Count de Gras, and Monsieur Barné still to retain the cottage in the south of France.

The passion of Lionel, the son of Monsieur St Merville, yielded to the force of time, which, added to study, completely effaced the precepts of love from his mind.

With Pierre and Leonora we now conclude.

The long wished for union was at length completed by the worthy Monsieur St Merville.

Their former lives exhibited scenes of vicissitudes unparalleled in their nature ; but the troubles which they had been visited with were small, when compared with the extent of their present bliss.

To dwell further on the subject is useless ; they received the unmixed portion of happiness which their virtues amply entitled them to expect.

The toil is at length completed : virtue is rewarded, vice punished, and disaffection reconciled.

The gamester has met with his hard fate, and the haughty, imperious, and wicked usurper of nature's rights, unable to meet the frowns of anger and the ends of justice, has rushed unsummoned into the presence of God.

In the Count de Gras we have the purest example of christian virtue. Adversity could not disarm his fortitude, prosperity intoxicate his senses, or oppression chill the warmth of his benevolence. No worldly affairs, no prospects of gain, how fair, how flattering soever, could shake the firmness of his integrity, or palsy the efforts of his christian piety. In short, the

all-seeing eye of Providence has favoured his fervent wishes, rewarded his inflexible integrity, and crowned his resignation with the smile of plenty.

The filial affection and genuine spirit of Henry are rewarded by the hand of the virtuous and amiable Clara Berné, whilst the magnanimous Pierre L'Oiseau has received the most refined bliss from the hand of the innately good Leonora. Her amiable ingenuousness and undisguised openness, and his expanded mind, liberal sentiments, and honourable ideas, will adorn the sphere of society, cheer the drooping spirits of unpitied poverty, and be the never-failing ingredients of that pure and unmixed happiness which will mark the tenor of their future lives.

And if these pages tend to enlighten the benighted mind of deluded virtue, or support the cause of morality, the author's ambition is satisfied, and the object of his feeble exertions highly gratified.

THE END.

ANDREA VIVANO;

OR,

THE ITALIAN POISONER.

" Again the childless father pressed his hands upon his eyes, as if he would shut out for ever the light of heaven, and the consciousness of existence. Vivano paused. After some time, Nature, ever true to herself, permitted the paroxysm of grief to subside, and Husborn, slowly taking his rigid fingers from his temples, turned a piteous look towards his companion, which seemed to intimate that he was prepared to hear the worst."

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ANDREA VIVANO;

OR, THE ITALIAN POISONER.

"ANDREA VIVANO, the Italian gentleman who lately lived with Master Husborn without the town, was yesterday morning found dead in the bed which the gaoler had permitted him to occupy. "The crowner's 'quest' hath already been taken, and it has been pronounced that the deceased had swallowed some potent drug, by which he was enabled to sleep himself to death. There is a strange discourse abroad about certain horrible crimes which the dead man attempted, if he did not in truth really perpetrate; but as it is said that the peace and reputation of a lady will be greatly affected by its general publication, we refrain from telling our readers even what little we know of this dark business."—*Woodhead's County Chronicle*, Thursday, Sept. 26, 1776.

MASTER JACOB HUSBORN lived in a castellated stone house standing between Hastings and Silscomb; a small place in which some medicinal springs had been discovered, and so advertised as to draw to its baths and villas many visitors. He was proud to believe that his dwelling had been erected by one of his own ancestors about the time of the accession of Queen Elizabeth; but he possessed no written records of his family by which the fact could be placed beyond controversy. He had, however, a few hundred acres of the good land of Sussex, which had certainly descended to him in direct entail from his great grandfather; and out of the revenue which they produced (he farmed them not himself), he was enabled to support the fitting establishment of an English country gentleman, who aspired to nothing more than lodging, feeding, and drinking genteelly and sufficiently, without being indebted to either physical or mental exertion, or the still more despised operations of trade and barter. Whenever Master Husborn was obliged to deliver his opinion on matters not immediately connected with the dining-room or the stable, he betrayed himself as an *ultra* amongst that class of landholders who took their tone from the minister and court of the day.

The household of Husborn comprised but few individuals; and its monotony must have been unbearable to one of less phlegmatic temperament. He had been early left a jolly, tearless widower, the father of one child, who alone of all created things could bring warmth and expression to his voice, brilliancy to his eye, or emotion to his heart. Margaret Husborn was some years past the season of absolute youth, but she was constitutionally the true offspring of her parent; and it seemed as if the seasons of infancy, womanhood, and mature age, were to pass over her without bringing forth those fruits of feeling, passion, and judgment, which are wont to distinguish her sex. She was, indeed, a woman—full of the virtues and full of the weaknesses of her kind—loving, credulous, passive, believing she was the creature, the slave, the admirer of all beings more intellectual than herself, with whom she became placed in contact. The Italian gentleman lived beneath the roof of the father and daughter thus described. This circumstance is easily explained. The Cinque Ports about the middle of the last century were the favourite resort of the idle, the fashionable, and the opulent, who were instructed by their physicians to seek health and amusement on their gay shores. Amongst such visitors to Hastings was the foreigner whose name has been given; and as it

was not then accounted disreputable, even amongst people of independence, to receive such inmates within their dwellings, Vivano became domiciled with Jacob Husborn and his gentle daughter Margaret. The Italian was a man of singular aspect and bearing, though it does not appear that, even from among the most discerning of those who looked upon him, any judgment was elicited to the prejudice of his personal and moral character.

Sigñor Andrea Vivano, at the time hinted at, was probably about the age of thirty. He had lived with Master Husborn more than twelve months—a most unusual circumstance, considering the short season-visits which people were in the habit of paying to the coast; and it was remarked that he had much improved the healthful hue of his complexion, and increased the rotundity and apparent strength of his limbs, since he first made his appearance. That which was most remarkable about him was his unvarying sameness of manner. Did the sun shine merrily in the skies, and all animated nature in some manner seem to rejoice in the calm and majestic beauty of the material world, Vivano would walk abroad in his usual half-quiet and half-sullen mood, and seem as if he feared or disdained to raise his eyes to the glorious clouds above.

Months passed away; and it began to appear, as time fled, that the approach of a more intimate union was about to take place in the little circle. Husborn had for some time seen that Vivano had spent much of his time with his daughter Margaret. He observed his conduct at first with apathy or indifference; and at last, so much had his friendship increased, that he sometimes thought of making a few necessary inquiries into his family and fortune, and accepting him for his son-in-law at once. He was the more induced to arrive at this conclusion, because, dull-eyed as he was, he could not but observe that his fair daughter, nothing loath, accompanied the Italian in all his long and gloomy walks, and, besides, wasted with him many hours in the library,—an apartment in his house into which no intrusion ever occurred. This equivocal intimacy continued to increase; not that, indeed, Vivano was more tender than at first in his attentions to Margaret, but every one could see, save the indolent father, there was a touching submission and respect in the conduct of the lady towards her lover, which declared him the lord of her heart and the master of her destinies, which she had not betrayed during the first few months of their acquaintance.

The dark cloud which had long been rising against the peace of Husborn at length reached its height, and was about to burst on his devoted head. He, too, felt the course of fate concerned him, though he knew not how or wherefore—he fluttered and trembled as a bird does when the heavy air is burdened with the coming storm. Every night he pressed his pillow he determined that the ensuing morn should be dedicated to a long interview with his guest, the conclusion of which, he doubted not, would be the recognition of one of some fortune, perhaps of rank, as the husband of his daughter. Meanwhile, Margaret partook of the change which seemed to pervade all the family. The gay and almost reckless air with which the young and innocent are wont to enjoy existence had fled, and gloom and impatience sat on her once calm brow. She seemed to desire to be alone with her father; yet, when she appeared the most so determined, Vivano would decline his usual walk, or hour of study, and, looking at her full in the face, would declare that he could not, would not, lose her society. It became evident that the manner in which the indolent English gentleman, his simple daughter, and the strange Italian, lived together, had in it nothing of the elements of duration, and strange circumstances presently dissolved it.

A court-martial was about to be held by the officers stationed with their troops at the castle of Hastings, on a fellow who had committed so atrocious a crime, that every one knew, though nobody of course spoke about it, that the trial, the sentence, and its execution, would succeed each other between sun and sun. One morning Vivano said, indifferently (it was his custom to attend all judicial proceedings relating to criminal affairs, and all public punishments and executions which occurred within an easy range of his residence), that he should visit the castle. "There, of course, my dear lady," said he, addressing himself to Margaret, "you will not wander."

Margaret trembled, and was the colour of one who had lain a day in the tomb.

"Where will you spend the day?" continued Vivano, in the same careless tone, but with his singular eyes turned keenly on the lady's face.

"I—I," said Margaret, laying her hand on the shoulders of her father, who, almost

unconscious of their presence, had been smiting with his face towards the fire—"I purpose, as the day is dry and fine, walking hence to the house of Madam Dorothea; my aunt, I hear, is unwell, and—" Margaret again turned and encountered the colourless eyes of the Italian—"and," said she, in a firmer tone, "with your good will, I will visit her and return on the morrow."

"Thy will and mine," said her father, with more sprightliness than was usual, "my good wench, are one; but, prithee, be not long away. And you, Signor Vivano, I shall look for ere night-fall; you know how our chess-board stands, and to-night I will be revenged."

The Italian smiled after his fashion; and, shortly afterwards, Margaret having twice kissed her father's cheek, a token of affection rarely known to pass in their phlegmatic family, each went forth, apparently to fulfil the purpose each had appointed.

The evening came, the urn hissed, and the fire hummed cheerfully; the chess-board, on which a game half played was exhibited, seemed to occupy the entire attention of Master Husborn, except that at intervals he turned somewhat impatiently towards the door. "Ay," said he, mentally, again peering towards the table, "thus I shall circumvent him, and prove my skill." But Vivano did not return, and the disappointed player, after concluding the game in his own mind a dozen times entirely to his own satisfaction, with a dismal air ordered his servant to light him to his chamber, and particularly desired, that when the Signor came home, he should be told that master had gone to bed, vexed that he had not returned in time to finish the game.

Some time after midnight the Italian gentleman did return, and, with his usual tactfulness, bidding good-night to the servant, after he had received his message, went to bed. In the morning Husborn looked peevish. Vivano, who had risen before him, accosted him frankly.

"Well, sir," said he, "the foolish wretch was shot—the hour was midnight. I could not forego the sight. You know my foible; it is my philosophy, not my want of humanity, which makes me curious to contemplate the way in which the human taper is extinguished. If I had returned in the evening I should have lost the pleasure—I mean the interest—I take in such scenes, and I should have been vexed to my own death to have been beaten in the match, which must yet, I suppose, be played out between us."

"Well," replied Husborn, with returning good humour, "the night is passed, and the present is a new day; our bonny Margaret will return anon, and we shall all again be merry."

The day did pass, but without its anticipated merriment—the lady returned not; the following night was passed in restlessness—the next day came, and was prolonged in its length by anxious thoughts—the succeeding night was one of trembling fear—the third day, since the departure of Margaret on her little journey, lingered in its course, yet she returned not to her home.

"Sir," said Vivano to Husborn, whose mind, unused to any occurrence out of the common course of an English independent life, seemed utterly broken by the loss of his daughter—"sir, good and obliging sir, I will instantly take horse, and visit the lady at whose house your daughter is sojourning; doubtless some sudden illness, perhaps, after all, of little import, has imprisoned her in her chamber. Be assured of her good presence, or at least of happy tidings, ere night."

Husborn sank into his chair, bewildered in doubt and fear, and Vivano immediately took his leave. The father passed another day of undefined anguish; the night was destined to give point and purpose to the arrow of grief which was about to cleave his heart. Long after the clouds of evening had fallen on the earth, the slow approach of a horse was heard at the gate. Husborn hastened to the portal of his house and received Vivano, who seemed labouring with some great sorrow and much physical exertion, and ready to sink to the ground. For a moment he looked as if he had forgotten his own wound, and was conscious only of the apparently prostrate situation of his friend. He led him into the accustomed parlour, and placing him on a chair, sat down in another beside him, unconsciously drawing a chair before their position. The instant these movements were completed, Husborn cast his eyes on the seat, and suddenly perceiving it was empty, he struck his open hands on his brow, and wept like a young child. Uncounted groans and sighs passed a few minutes, and Vivano waited the return of comparative placidity and intellect before he spoke. The old man—he had much advanced in age during the last five days—drew his hands from his brows, and drying

them mechanically with his handkerchief, turned towards his companion a look which needed not the interpretation of words.

" Sir," said the Italian, recurring to his usual cold equanimity of manner, " I have read in some books of my native land, that the brave English tremble, like curs, on the first approach of danger and bereavement; but that the moment the demons of evil and grief really present themselves, they assume the courage and constancy of their bold country-dogs, and perish not but in the warm and painless hour of struggling and warfare."

Husborn replied to this exordium with a childish look of inquiry. Another minute of silence ensued, when the speaker continued:—

" Your——my Margaret has not visited the relation she spoke of, nor has the lady seen your daughter since the spring of the last year."

Again the childless father pressed his hands upon his eyes, as he would shut out for ever the light of heaven, and the consciousness of existence. Vivano paused. After some time, nature, ever true to herself, permitted the paroxysm of grief to subside, and Husborn, slowly taking his rigid fingers from his temples, turned a piteous look towards his companion, which seemed to intimate that he was prepared to hear the worst. The speaker continued,—

" Your daughter, on the evening of the day she left us, was seen walking alone near the White-horse rock; a few hours afterwards, an alarm was raised along the coast that a boat's crew from a pirate brig, which the night before had run into one of the neighbouring creeks, had committed many acts of violence and plunder, and had seized an unprotected woman as she was wandering by the edge of the waters." Husborn again averted his face; but, as he seemed to retain a consciousness of the meaning of the words addressed to him, Vivano steadily continued:—" Upon hearing this rumour, I spurred my horse to the beach, and after some time lost in tiresome inquiry, I arrived at the huts of a few fishermen, by whom, as it afterwards appeared, the rumour of the atrocious acts of the pirates had been sent abroad. It signifies not to mention that the plunder of the seamen was made up chiefly of the coarse provisions of the country people; they bore with them a woman whom they had seized on an unfrequented strand. Several old and discreet fishermen told me that, when the alarm was raised, and they discovered with their glasses that the rovers were four leagues from land, they saw distinctly, standing up amidst their dark-blue jackets, the figure of a tall lady dressed in flowing white. I inquired why they did not make pursuit? They laughed at my question. Her topmost bit of canvass, said one, only was visible when the first officer of his Majesty's revenue cutter was acquainted with the outrage."

Vivano paused, not as if he had concluded his recital, but with a tone which indicated an expectation of hearing some remark made on that which he had already detailed. Not a word was heard; he gently raised the candle, and looked for some moments intently on the face of Husborn; it was partly hidden from view, having fallen on his right arm, as it lay extended on the back rail of the chair. " Malice domestic" could not for a time " touch him farther." He had fallen into a swoon, and was, for a certain period, dead to the pains of the present hour, and to all the hopes of the future. Vivano silently returned to his seat, and sat down like a piece of art, fashioned in imitation of humanity, looking like warm life, but being in reality without breath or pulse. This statue-like position and silence were maintained upwards of an hour, when the Italian gentleman rose with the utterly noiseless manner which distinguished all his movements, gave another look at the unconscious Husborn, and gliding out of the room, passed to his own chamber.

The sixth morning after the abduction of his daughter, Husborn met again, at the breakfast table, his friend and companion. A strange alteration was seen in his appearance. The hearty rotundity of his countenance was broken up; his fleasy cheeks, which so lately bore the shape and hue of vigour, hung in sallow folds on his sunken jaws; his eyes, which, but a few days before, were round and bright, were now reduced to narrow lines, which, obscured with rheum and tears, scarce could take in the glaring light of day; and his manly hands prematurely shook with the weakness of confirmed palsy and extreme age.

The seventh and the eighth day since the departure of Margaret succeeded each other, and it became evident, in this brief space of time, that the amiable and plethoric Husborn would not suddenly die of grief for the loss of his daughter. He seemed to bear the pressure of his woes, as does the tortoise a huge stone placed upon his enduring back; the weight which was

upon him made him breathe hard, and remain on the spot on which he was fixed, yet he did breathe and live. Deprived of the companionship and ministration of his daughter, Vivano became more necessary to him than ever. He now seldom spoke; but, when he did, he called him his son, and entreated him not to leave him alone in a world which contained for him few of kin, friendship, or acquaintance. "When I die," said the old man, "the house and lands are yours; abide here, and wait the coming of my child." Another of those oblivious fits, so common to men of his physical nature, succeeded, and Vivano carried him to his couch.

Husborn's remark that on this earth he should sleep little, proved no chance prophecy, but the emanation of some inward and spiritual knowledge. On the night of the ninth day of his distress, after sitting some hours listlessly in company with Vivano, he said, "My son, I have thrice watched the coming and going of the moon, and the nights appear to me to be treble their usual length. I cannot sleep."

"Sir," said the Italian gentleman, somewhat carelessly, "that should be cured; madness or death must assuredly succeed after a certain number of watching hours. Here now," said he, producing a small phial, "I have the means of commanding tranquil sleep and happy dreams; it is a medicine discovered by a monk of Rome. Take it; seek to slumber without its aid; but should the hour of midnight again strike on your ear, swallow the whole contents, and quickly you will fall asleep in the pleasing consciousness of the coming of a peaceful and happy morn."

The passive patient took the nostrum from the hand of his friend, and shortly afterwards the household retired to rest.

The Italian gentleman rose early the next morning, and with noiseless tread approached the sick man's door. He listened with much attention for some minutes, and returned. An hour afterwards he glided again to the chamber; all was yet still. He then dressed himself; and desiring the servant not to awaken his master, who happily was in a deep sleep, departed for a walk, which, as he said, would occupy several hours.

Vivano had scarcely passed beyond call from the house, when the bell of Husborn's chamber was rung somewhat violently. The servant instantly entered, and beheld his master sitting upright in the bed. "Tell Signor Vivano," said he, wildly, "I would speak with him."

"He has left some time," said the man, "on his morning's walk, and I know not which road he has taken."

"Was this done kindly?" rapidly replied the master. "Well, go, and quickly, to Dr Mytton, and say I need to see him instantly."

The message was a joyful one to a faithful servant who loved his master, and he hastened to deliver it. Hitherto all men of known skill and advice had been kept from his presence by the interposition of Vivano, who denounced the healing art as one of absolute conjecture.

After a very short lapse of time, the gold-headed cane of the physician preceded him in his progress to the sick chamber. The servant had, in fact, met him within a few paces of Husborn's house, to which he was, as he told him, purposely proceeding. In a few minutes he was standing by the side of his patient, had his hand on his pulse, and was anxiously tracing the fearful contortions which now shook his frame. He saw, in a moment, temporary delirium had seized on his friend, and that the present was no moment to enter on business which required the highest exertions of sanity and self-possession.

"By what fires are those demons burnt who steal away a man's heart? See, doctor," said the bewildered man, tearing open his vest, "see, they have stolen mine; what a horrible void is here!"

"Your daughter," said the physician mildly. He had, with learned and humane skill, touched the chord which vibrated to intelligence; "your daughter," he repeated in a soothing tone. The wild aspect of the sick man fled at once; he threw himself forward on the bosom of the doctor, and covered him with his tears. Taking instant advantage of this sudden return of sensibility, Dr Mytton gently chid his patient for his irritability. "Do you know," said he, "that I come to tell you some chance exists of recovering your lost daughter?"

Husborn raised his head from the bosom of the physician, and sprung up with convulsive strength.

"Nay, my friend," he continued, "I did not say she had been recovered; I did not say she

was alive and in safety amongst her friends ; but be patient, bear the dispensations of Heaven and cease not to pray that they may fall lightly on you."

The sovereignty of the poor father's intellect at this instant appeared perfectly restored. He placed himself in a quiet, retired posture ; and, taking the hand of his attendant, said in a plaintive but composed tone, "I knew you, Dr Mytton ; you have dealt kindly towards me, but it avails not. I know what I have lost. I need now no opiate for the mind, no administration of false hope, to give me peace and resignation. As you have commanded me, I bow to the will of Heaven."

"Master Husborn," said the physician, still more depending on the improved manner of his patient, "I have spoken to you the words of hope ; and when did Dr Mytton"—rising as he spoke with some dignity—"when did Dr Mytton give his patient hope of escape from sorrow or death, that he had to thank the churchyard stone for concealing his falsehood or his ignorance ?"

"Never, never !" said the patient. "But where," continued he, in a voice which increased every moment in power and vivacity, "where is my Signior Andrea Vivano ? He had used to watch my bedside, though he never spoke to me such words of good cheer as I have heard from you." The physician changed countenance when he heard the name of the Italian ; but Husborn did not notice the circumstance and proceeded. "He will be angry when he returns to find that I have taken council of you ; he hath heretofore administered to me. Here—sh, here ! is a draught which I should have taken last midnight, had not the watching of three nights following each other procured me sleep."

"Let me see it," said the physician, in a quick tremulous tone, seizing at the same time a very small bottle of some black liquid, which lay on a table within reach of the bed. Without saying another word, the doctor opened the bottle, and tasted the contents. With a convulsive effort he instantly ejected the liquid ; and in a sort of constrained composure of manner, put the phial into his pocket. "Farewell, my friend," said he to Husborn ; "remember that I, Dr Mytton, have given you hopes of soon coming health and peace. I shall visit you again ere the day be out, and in the meantime repose in quiet. Follow only the directions of your faithful servant, whom I will instruct in his duty."

The physician took a hasty departure ; and at the door, summoned Felix, the honest servant of the house. "When does the Signior return ?" quoth he. "Perhaps, sir, in two hours."

"Tis well," he replied ; "be without your master's door while he is absent ; when he returns, on your life remain within his chamber, and see that the patient receive naught from any hands but mine. Anon I shall return."—"Safe," said Felix. The doctor and the fellow seemed to understand each other ; and as the one departed, the other proceeded directly to his master's bed-room door, and quietly laid himself across it.

It was near mid-day when the Italian gentleman returned. Upon entering the house he looked quickly round, and in a somewhat hurried tone inquired the health of his host. "Somewhat better," briefly replied Felix ; "he sleeps still, and must not be disturbed." Vivano appeared to recoil for a moment upon himself ; but, suddenly recovering, he waved his hand in token of his approbation of the intelligence, and walked into his apartment.

The Italian had scarcely seated himself, and produced from his pocket a parcel of papers, which he was about to peruse, when a peculiar rap at the door called Felix from his post to receive the physician. "Stout Felix," said the doctor, "I will now take charge of your master : stand you at the portal ; let none now within go home ; but, at your discretion, admit all who seek to enter." The doctor walked slowly towards the room occupied by the foreigner : and as he put his hand on the lock, turning back his head, he saw the mayor of Hastings, his jurats and attendants, in an imposing but quiet array, enter the house. He drew back and gave them precedence ; and in a moment the retired parlour of Master Husborn was filled with important personages, and became the scene of grave business. An athletic man, stepping directly up to the Signior, inquired if his name was not Andrea Vivano. "So they call me," said the Italian with hesitation. "Then here I arrest thee," said the man, putting his heavy hand between his neck and shoulder ; "here I arrest thee, Andrea Vivano, for sundry capital felonies."

A hum of expectation filled the apartment, notwithstanding it was occupied nearly altogether by those who knew the mystery of the whole business. The Italian making no present reply

to the sombre somnous with which he had been visited, the mayor stepped forward into the middle of the apartment, and spoke as follows:—" Signor, on the oaths of two good and veritable men I have issued my warrant, charging you with having compassed and designed the death of more than one of his majesty's subjects. We are instructed that one of your victims now lies in this house in mortal extremity; and therefore are we here in person to take from him his last evidence, so that your crimes, if they be proved against you, escape not punishment in this world by the untimely death of true witnesses."

" May it please your worship," said Dr Myton, stepping forward with alacrity, " the worthy Master Newborn is not in extreme. The whole course of examination, which will doubtless end in the commitment or deliverance of that man, may, with much physical benefit, take place in his presence; nay, I almost preclude that the excitement of his latent feelings, which certainly will be exhibited on the occasion, may deteining him at once towards health and reason."

" As you advise, worthy doctor," said the mayor; " such a course will at least save the time and trouble of further examinations."

Presently the whole party were in the spacious chamber occupied by Master Huskyn. He sat, after the physician had whispered something earnestly in his ear, with much placidity and self-possession in an easy chair placed in the centre of the room. The mayor and his attendants were soon suitably accommodated; and the prisoner having been placed between the athletic man who had arrested him and the stout Felix, the worthy Dr Myton, who seemed to take upon himself the office of public prosecutor, stepped forth. " Call," said he, with the voice of one expecting to be obeyed, " Mistress Colvile." An attendant went to the door, and ushered in a matronly woman, of suspicious gentility of appearance. " Look round," said the physician, " and see if you behold any of whom it becomes you on your oath to testify the truth."

The woman turned round, and encountered the figure of the Italian gentleman, as he stood with folded arms, calmly looking towards the ceiling of the room. " That is the man!" she at once exclaimed; " I know him by his white eyes."

" Truly, but truly, desire what you know of him," said the mayor.

" First relieve me of that weight of guilt!" exclaimed the woman, throwing down a heavy purse of guineas; " I cannot breathe freely while it lies on my bosom."

For a moment the witness breathed hard, and trembled; then, clasping her hands, and appearing to look upward with joy and gratitude, in a firm tone she spoke as follows:

" On the night of the 7th of the current month, that gentleman, whose name I know not, but who, as I take it, is a foreigner, entered my obscure lodgings in the outskirts of the neighbouring town of Wheatsheaf. I need not detail the discourse which privately engaged us. I promised to receive at his hands, at a certain coming time, a lady whose situation required instantaneus care, and, for her honour's sake, a matron's vigilance. At the time appointed they came. I thought, when I looked on the young stranger, that she might have withheld her visit for some time at least; but that was not my business. He had great ado to part from her; she wept much; and I heard her detain him, almost by mere force, until he had made many vows, the purport of which I could scarcely collect. At length he came down stairs. 'Here,' said he, giving me that purse, which then contained five more pieces, ' here is for thy charges; and,' said he, whispering, ' they will serve thee well until I return from that foreign clime to which I have privately told thee I am destined'; but, added he, 'if— and thou knowest the chances of the time— neither mother or child should remain to be thy burthen, the residue of the purse is thine.' I was about to ask some explanation, but he hastily bade me be silent and discreet, and vanished. The next day I looked on my lodger; her eyes were red with weeping. I could have taken my sacramental oath she had been my own poor daughter, who died broken-hearted about fifteen years ago, when she was about her age. From that moment I received all she should receive from my hand— all the care and service of a mother. A night or two afterwards a sum of angelic issued from the lady's room; I rushed from my door, and summoned a worthy man, named Master Gurney, who lived near me. He was by her bedside less a few minutes; and in an hour afterwards he made me understand, frightened as I was, that my lodger had given birth to a dead child; and that being now in a state of high delirium, my sole business was to take care lest in a moment of returning strength she committed violence on herself."

Husborn, who had been sighing audibly during this recital, at length demanded, with emotion, "Does she live—does she live?"

The physician waved his hand, and in a moment his daughter Margaret was on her knees before him. The good man uttered a sort of hysterical laugh; his face and neck then suddenly assumed a purple colour, his eyes closed, and he fell back on his chair. The physician and Master Gourney hastened to him. "This I feared," said the latter.

"If you bleed him," observed the Italian, for the first time breaking his peace, "he dies upon the spot."

The medical men exchanged a brief look of incredulity; and before ten could be counted, they had struck a lancet into his arm, and his blood spouted directly on the prisoner. Not many minutes elapsed before the benevolent doctors succeeded in restoring, not only animal life, but perfect sensibility to the patient. He spoke not; but he raised his daughter, and placed her by his side.

"May it please your worship now," said Dr Mytton, "my patient's strength having, contrary to my anticipation, shown itself unequal to the present hearing of the full development of the scenes of guilt whereof the gracious course of events has given me the knowledge, permit me to depose to certain particulars, which, doubtless, will determine your worship at once to hold this man with a strong hand until he abide his trial. Sitting last night alone in my study, this gentleman, Mr Gourney, a worthy practitioner of Winchelsea, called on me. He told me that he had been suddenly called to attend an unknown female, whom he had delivered from the pangs of childbirth, and the imminent danger of madness or death, who had, by the advice of her lover, swallowed an almost certain poison. All, he said, that he could elicit from the poor patient was, that her lover had promised to be her husband; that he had convinced her her confinement must be secret, while he solemnly guaranteed to give full satisfaction to her friends; and finally that the last promise he extorted from her was, that at the moment she felt the pangs of a mother come upon her, she should swallow the contents of a small phial (a portion of which Mr Gourney presented me with), which he assured her would carry her through her hour of trial without pain or consciousness.

"I immediately set out to visit the young female, and at once knew her to be the daughter of the honest Master Husborn. I said not a word of this recognition, but went home. In the morning early I took my way to this house, pondering in my mind what would occur in my interview with its master, whose loss, and consequent illness, I had been made acquainted with. While I was thus filled with doubtful anticipations, walking slowly, I was summoned to hasten my pace, to give aid in a case of imminent danger. I found this sufferer," pointing to Husborn, "bereft of reason. By moral and physical means, I in part restored him to the dignity of his nature. He confided to me his secret sorrows; and amongst other matters which seemed to him of least importance, he showed me this small phial, the contents of which he had been requested, by his dear acquaintance, friend, and son-in-law that should have been, Signior Andrea Vivano, now standing there, to quaff off, at midnight, as the means of procuring the blessing of sleep." A pause ensued, and all eyes were turned towards the Italian gentleman. The physician continued—"The phial found in the hand of the young lady by my colleague, and that delivered to me by Master Husborn, are alike; and the contents of both the syrup of the poppy of Natolia, a throe mortal poison. A tithe part of the contents now remaining swallowed by any present would produce instant and unresisted death, unless, as it does happen with the human economy once in about fifty experiments, a retching sickness should supervene, and the drug should be rejected."

A general respiration of breath, which seemed indicative alike of satisfaction and horror, pervaded the whole chamber. Silence ensued; and the mayor, taking up a pen, was about to sign a paper, when he was interrupted by a hollow laugh, which proceeded from the Italian. "Well!" he exclaimed with affected ease, "to what purpose is this mummerery? You say I administered my good medicine to this simple man and his daughter to destroy, and not to save their lives. Be it so; the bad opinion of any here will not affect the peace of an Italian. Behold, they are alive! I have committed no murder; set me free!"

"Signior," said the magistrate with extraordinary gravity, "you contemplated murder, and worked warily for its consummation. I know not the laws of your country; but here

in England, where we know no assassins, if a man take counsel to circumvent the life of his fellow-creature, and is prevented in his design by the kind interposition of Providence, nevertheless he is amenable to the same mortal penalty as if his machinations had been successful."

The Italian closed his eyes for a moment, but made no reply. The magistrate proceeded to complete his signature, and presently the apartment was cleared of all neighbours and strangers.

The event of the following day has been recorded by the intelligent William Woodhead. It only remains to mention, that amongst Vivano's papers left in the house of Master Husborn, a fair copy of the will made in his favour was found, and a citation from the elders of the University of Padua, calling on one Signor Vicentino, physician, to appear at a private examination, in the case of certain libels issued against him, charging him with attempting the lives of two women living in that city. The latter document bore the date June 5, 1775.

THE END.

